GOLDEN JUBILEE OF INDIA'S INDEPENDENCE SERIES-20

INTRODUCTION TO TANTRAS AND THEIR PHILOSOPHY

PUSHPENDRA KUMAR

RASHTRIYA SANSKRIT SANSTHAN

The present book *Introduction to Tantras and their Philosophy* is an exhaustive treatment of the *Tantras*, their religion, philosophy and *sādhanā* etc. The *Tantras* are ritual, religious authorities after the *Vedas* and *Dharmaśāstras* including *Purāṇas*. It is considered that by practising *Tāntric* form of *Sādhanā*, both worldly prosperity and final salvation are achieved, though the *Tantras* have been considered by some scholars as contrary to Vedic religion.

The book highlights the Vedic basis of tantricism and its different aspects as recognised by the *Tantra* tradition. Quotations from different sources have enriched the authenticity of the scholarly work. Definitely the book will be of immense interest for both the readers in general and the students of *Tantras* in particular.

Golden Jubilee of India's Independence Series-20

INTRODUCTION TO *TANTRAS* AND THEIR PHILOSOPHY

PUSHPENDRA KUMAR

RASHTRIYA SANSKRIT SANSTHAN
1998

Publisher :
Dr. K.K. Mishra
Director
Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan
56-57, Institutional Area, Janakpuri
New Delhi-110058
Tel.: 5540993, 5540995

© Rashtriya Sanskrti Sansthan

First Edition : 1998

Price : 150/-

Printer :
Nag Publishers
11A/U.A., Jawahar Nagar, Delhi-7

FOREWORD

I have great pleasure to present this volume of *Golden Jubilee of India's Independence Series* of *Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan* to our esteemed readers. The Volume verily represents the goodwill and cooperation, the Sansthan has all along been receiving from the distinguished scholars all over the country.

The Sansthan was established in October, 1970 as an autonomous apex body under the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India with a view to promoting, preserving and propagating Sanskrit learning in all its aspects, with special reference to the in-depth shastraic learning. Apart from conducting the regular courses of studies at the constituent Vidyapeethas, it has been bringing out invaluable publications representing dissemination of knowledge contained in the various Shastras.

Thanks to the continued help, encouragement and support from the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India that the Sansthan has grown in leaps and bounds and has been able to render its services to promotion of Sanskrit learning at national and international levels. Sansthan has decided to bring out 50 scholarly monographs by eminent Sanskrit scholars of different fields as part of the academic programmes organised to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of India's Independence.

The present book *Introduction to Tantras and their Philosophy* deals with the various aspects of the *Tantra* and its practice as prevailed in different parts of the country. It highlights the Vedic base of the *Tantra* and its varied aspects like esotericism, *Sādhanā, Śaktipūjā* etc. The book would be useful to those who are interested in the *Tantra* literature.

We are highly grateful to **Prof. Pushpendra Kumar,** Professor and former Head, Department of Sanskrit, University of Delhi, for contributing this valuable book under the *Golden Jubilee of India's Independence Series*.

The services rendered by my colleagues specially by *Dr. Savita Pathak* and *Dr. Viroopaksha V. Jaddipal* deserve special appreciation who have worked day and night for planning and organising the various programmes connected with the Golden Jubilee Celebrations, particularly the publications of the Golden Jubilee Series. *M/s Nag Publishers* deserve our thanks for bringing out this monograph on time.

K.K. MISHRA
Director
Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan
New Delhi.

12.10.1998

Introduction

The *Saurasaṁhitā*, copied in 1941 A.D., *with two leaves in Gupta characters giving a number of Tantric formulae,* the *Kubjikāmatatantra,*[1] and *Pārameśvaramatatantra,* in traditional Gupta scripts, make an interesting study.[2] They show that *Tantrism* came to the forefront in the Gupta age, and further that whatever may be the date of a copy, (cf. *Saurasaṃhitā*) the original may be, at least in some cases, an older one. As the texts show, it is wrong to believe that *Tantrism* began solely centering the Mother Goddess. The first deities in the *Tantras* were the Sun (cf. the *Saurasaṃhitā,* and the *Śaktis,* like *Vāgīśvarī* (*cf. Pārameśvarīmatatantra,* where she is described as the highest *Śakti*) and *Kubjikā,* a goddess of the potter class. It is therefore not without significance that the *Gangdhār inscription,* referring to the Great Mother with her associates, the *Dākini,* and the magic rite, come from the same period, 423-4 A.D. As the *Kubjikāmata* text refers to *pūrvatantra,* it may be assumed that *Tāntrism* began in an age when the Scytho-Kuṣāna impact was still in force, inasmuch as the Sun cult of the period shows *Magian* influence, while the *Kubjikātantra* actually refers to the *Magas*.[1]

---

[1] In his *Durbar Library Catalogue,* H.P. Shastri refers to it as the *Kubjikāmata* i.e., the text of the Kubjikāmata school. (i.ixxviii). The term *mata* means doctriṇe (Apte).

[2] *Durbar Library Catalogue,* i.44, no. 1230; 10 & 137, no. 277; ii, 46 where we find a reference to Prof. Bendall's Cam. Cat. 27.

Some scholars have claimed a hoary antiquity for *Tantrism* on the following grounds :

a. the earliest trace of animal sacrifice which forms an important part of *Tāntric* worship is found to have been prevalent as early as the pre-historic Indus culture days;

---

[1] The *Magas* came to India in the train of the *Śakas* and are descrbed in the *Mahābhārata* as the Brāhmanas of the Śaka community in India (S. Chattopadhyay, *The Śakas in India*, 1967, 5). The date of *Tantra*, preserved in the Nepal Durbar Library has been a matter of some speculation. The text betrays a nervousness that a day may come when the Magas will be equal to the Brāhmaṇas. Already in the *Geography* of Ptolemy, we find reference to the *Brakhmanoi Magoi* or the *Maga Brāhmaṇas* as living near the Malaya range, but their distinct entity is clearly preserved. We may not accept in this connection the following observation of R.P. Chanda *Varāhamihira*, who died in A.D. 587, says in his *Bṛhatsaṃhitā* (60,19) that the installation and consecration of the images and the temples of the sun should be caused to be made by the *Magas*. *Bāṇa* in his *Harṣacarita* (Chap.iv) introduces us to an astrologer called Tāraka the Bhojaka (Maga)....In the Deo-Baranak inscription of Jīvitagupta II of Magadha, who flourished in the eighth century A.D., recorded with the object of continuing the grant of a village to the Sun under the name of Varuṇasvāmin, several generations of Bhojakas are referred to....(*The Indo-Aryan Races, 85*). These examples show how the Bhojaka or the Maga Brāhmaṇas were gradually establishig themselves in the Indian orthodox society, and this nervousness is betrayed in the Durbar Library text.

b. the *Nārāyaṇīyatantra* says *that the Vedas have originated from the Tantras* proving thereby that the *Tantras* were prevalent before the *Vedas* were composed.

c. many of the semi-magical elements found in the *Tantras* bear close resemblance to those found in the *Atharvaveda*.

d. many of the deities like *Śiva, Śakti, Viṣṇu. Sūrya, Gaṇapati* and others who find a prominent place in the *Tantras* are also mentioned in the earlier texts.[1]

There cannot be any denying of the fact that many of the important elements that find a place in the *Tantras* can be traced in earlier documents. This was evidently due to the fact that the *Tantras* had been drawing their materials from the earlier source. Indian mind always finds unity in diversity and the Tantras brought this unity in the field of religion. Thus one of the Tāntric texts now available to us states in very clear terms that the *Tantras* represent the essence of the *Vedas* and the *Āgamas*, which, according to Apte's *Dictionary*, means the *śāstras* in general or the sacred writings of the scriptures. An analysis of the *Tantras* shows that they contain the essentials of the Vedic worship with its *animal sacrifice, diagrams* etc., the absolute *monism* of the *Upaniṣads;* the *yoga* doctrine of *Patañjali and the bhakti* or the devotional elements of the *Purāṇic* texts.[1]

---

[1] Chintaharan Chakravarti, *Tantras-Studies on their Religion and Literature*, 7-18; IHQ, vi, 114-26. Deviprasad Chattopadhyaya who thinks that the *Tantras* developed from the agricultural rituals of the primitive people pushes its date as early as the Indus valley civilisation and points out that *even in the Ṛgveda (iv. 57,6) we have examples of chants designed to ensure success in agriculture.* (*Lokayata*, 271) B. Bhattacharya thinks that the Tantras are pre-Buddhistic in origin (*Sādhanamālā, xvii)* while Durga Prasad has tried to explain some of the symbols occurring on the pre-Christian coins and seals by attributing *Tantric* character to them (JASB, 1934, *Num Suppl.*).

---

[1] N.K. Brahma, *Philosophy of Hindu sādhanā*, 274ff. In fact, the Tantras make a synthesis of all the earlier forms of *sādhana* and we have, besides the Buddhist Tantrs, the Tantras of the Śaivas, Śāktas, Vaiṣṇavas and other sects. (Woodroffe, *Shakti* and *Shākta*, 55). It is thus clear that the Tantras preach a new doctrine that was accepted by all. Elliot is undoubtedly right when he makes a distinction between *Tantrism and Śāktism*. (C. Elliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, ii 280ff). The basis of the Tantric philosophy is the doctrine of *Puruṣa*, who can work but only through *prakṛti*, or, in other words, *Puruṣa* is inactive while *Prakṛti* is active and hence she is apparently more important than the former. Agehānanda Bharati points out that in Tibetan doctrine, on the other hand, the dynamix function is assigned to the male, and *the static to the female* metaphysical principle...The homology is rigid..there are a few instances (in Hindu Tantric literature)..in which the dynamic function is assigned to Śiva (the male principle), as for instance in the *Periyapurāṃam*, a canonical text of Tamil Śaivism; also the static function is assigned to the female principle in at least two passages in the *Mārkaṇḍeya purāṇa, Caṇḍīpāthas* (*The Tantric tradition*, 212-3). The description of the goddess *Kālī* or *Śyāmā* as *viparītaratā sakānī* in the *Tantrasāra* (310) illustrates the Hindu Sāṅkhya view

A study of the *Vedas* reveals that the physical phenomena first attracted the attention of the people and later on they came to be deified, and this brought its bad effects as well. This happened in case of early Greek and Indian *religions* also. There is no great moral harm in worshipping a thunderstorm even though the lightning strikes the good and the evil quite recklessly. There is no need to pretend that the lightning is exercising a wise and righteous choice, but when once you worship an imaginary quasi-human being who throws the lightning you are in a dilemma. Either you have to admit that you are worshipping and flattering a being with no moral sense, because he happens to be dangerous, or else you have too invent reasons for his wrath against the people. And they are pretty sure to be bad reasons. The God if personal, becomes capricious and cruel.[1] Thus the worship becomes utilitarian as we find it in the *Vedas*. Different gods are invoked for different purposes, some time moral, and some time immoral in the sense of doing harm to others. The *Takman* verse of the *Atharvaveda* transfers *Takman* or high fever to others' body so that the sufferer may be cured. One may naturally doubt how far this is in keeping with the true spirit of religion which, however, has no absolute standard, varying from people to people. Different methods were evolved to satisfy different gods and these methods included, among others, offering of

---

indirectly; there is no vulgarity in it, inasmuch as it represents a doctrine through icon.

[1] *For Stages of Greek Religion*, 88, as quoted by S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, i, 106.

oblations into fire lit up on a diagram drawn on the ground while the fuel consisted of branches of different kinds of trees. Naturally fire lit up with one staff meant for doing good to one, should differ from the other meant for injuring another person and eliciting from the god a diametrically opposite type of favour.

If thus the *Vedas* proper bequeathed for the posterity *an ulterior* or utilitarian worship, it left side by side a noble heritage of philosophical speculations that ultimately led to the rise of the *Upaniṣads* and other philosophical treatise.[1] This twofold character of the *Vedas* simply reflects the mind and aspirations of the people in general. When we remember the fact that Hinduism was not started by any *prophet,* that it arose as cumulative religious impacts of the various ethnological groups living in India,[2] we can at once discern various different stages in it and its first indication is offered to us by the Vedas which in its gradual development began[1] showing such traces.[2] As the *Tantras* also betray ethnological influence of diverse types we may note at this stage the racial elements in the population of India. We shall turn to this discussion later on, as we can undoubtedly trace the influence of the religious thoughts and practices of each of these. The *Gītā* claims to give us the milk of the *Upaniṣads* (*sarvopaniṣado gāvo dogdhā Gopālanandanaḥ)* presents before us three distinct forms of *sādhanā* according to preference :

---

[1] *Atharvaveda, v,* 22, 5-14. Here Takman, possibly a kind of malarial fever, is transferred through a chant to the *Canghārīs,* the *Mujavants,* the *Aṅgas* and the *Magadhas,* showing that the composer, who evidently lived in the Madhyadeśa region, shows a dislike for men living outside his own territorial division; for Gandhārī, or the Gandhāra country, denoted the region lying on both the sides of the river Indus, though later on the modern Peshawar district in Pakistan, while Magadha and Aṅga comprised South Bihar.

[2] S. Radhakrishnan observes : *The hymns form the foundation of subsequent Indian thoughts. While the Brāhmaṇas emphasise the sacrificial ritual shadows forth in the hymns, the Upaniṣads carry out their philosophical suggestions. The theism of the Bhagavadgītā is only an idealisation of Varuṇa worship. The great doctrine of Karma is yet in its infancy as Ṛtatā. The dualistic metaphysics of the Sāṃkhya is the logical development*

a. acquiring of sublime knowledge which would make one-self realise the real self within one's mortal coil;

b. offering to god by various *Vedic* methods of oblations and sacrifice; and,

---

of the conception of Hiraṇyagarbha floating on the waters. The description of the ecstatic conditions caused by the performance of sacrifice or the singing of hymns or the effects of the Soma juice when we see the glories of the heavenly world remind us of the yogic states of divine blessedness where voices are heard and visions see.' (Indian Philosophy, i, 116).

[1] S Chattopathyaya, *Sects*, 2ff.

[2] The mention in the *Ṛgveda* of the black *ṛṣis* side by side with the white ones shows clearly a mixture of the Nordics with the pre-Nordic black people in the early stage of their religious development. This is carried to a greater extent by the evidence of Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya*, which states *inter alia* that real Brāhmaṇhood was characterised by white complexion, pure conduct, yellow or red hair etc. (Chanda, *The Indo-Aryan Races*, 14).

c. worshipping the deity by offering of flower, leaf, water etc. with devotion.

The third form of *sādhanā* which plays such an important role in modern *Hindustan* comes from non-Indian sources[2] and thus various features from the *Proto-Australoid, Dravidian* and *Mongoloid* sources found their way into the *Hindu* religion which had always been trying to make a synthesis of all. The *Tantras* also made a similar attempt in keeping with the agelong Indian tradition with the difference that it was less orthodox in attitude. This should have been the case, for when the *Tantras* were

---

[1] *Bhagavadgītā*, ix. 24-26.

[2] *S.K. Chatterjee*, in *The Vedic Age*, *Ṛ-1*. *'the characteristic offerings in the pūjā rite, viz. flower, leaves, fruits, water etc., are not known to the homa rite, except in instances where it has been influenced by the Pūjā. It has been suggested with good reason the pūjā is the pre-Aryan, in all likelihood the Dravidian form of worship, while homa is the Aryan; and throughout the entire early Vedic literature, the pūjā ritual with flowers etc. offered to an image or symbol is unknown.* Thus the injuction of offeriṇg *pūjā* with flowers, leaves, water etc., found in the *Purāṇas* and the Tantras, comes ultimately from the pre-Aryan sources. This shows that the *Tantras* were deriving their materials from diverce sources, pre-Aryan, Aryan and even extra Indian, (*of. Cīnācāra, infra*). The injuction of the *Tantras* belonging to the *Kubjikā* school that the gooddess *Kubijkā* is to be worshipped in the house of the weavers and potter class show that some of the *Tantric* practices came from the lower strata of the Hindu society. cf: *Telikānāṃ gṛham gatvā kumbhakāragṛham tu vā, tatra tatpalibhiḥ sārddhaṃ yajeta parameśwarīm.* (*Jayadrathayāmala*, Durbar Library dialogue, i, 176). The above statement stands in great contrast to the account

composed various non-Aryan and extra-Indian factors had crept into the field of *Hinduism* and Buddhism and the later writers could not avoid them. Thus the grand process of synthesis which began in the age of the *Bhagavadgītā,* as noted above, reached its culmination in the Tantras.

Two questions have often disturbed the mind of Indologists : *first,* why the Tantras are so much heterodox in character when an early work like *Kulārṇava* extols the orthodox texts; and, *secondly,* how far can we trace foreign influence in it?

A study of the *Tantric.* texts reveals the fact that the majority of the *Tantras* centre round *mother cult* and they are heterodox in nature, while a few

---

of the *Parameśvaratanira* opening with an invocation to god Śiva and recording the conversation between Ṛcika and Mataṅga. It speaks about *dīkṣā, mukti, Veda, Sāṃkhya* and *Yoga*. The statement *na hi Vedāt Parañcānyad yogī...* seems to indicate that it came from the upper class. Thus the *Tantras* combine in themselves various forms of *sādhanā* prevalent since c.300A.D. We find an echo of it in the *Kulārṇava* :

mathitvā jñānamanthena vedāgamamahārṇavam I
sarvajnana mayā devi kuladharmaḥ samuddhṛ I *ḥ* I I
etaḥ sakalā dharmā yajñatīrtkvratādayaḥ I
ekataḥ kuladharmāṇi tatra kaulo'dhikaḥ priye I I
pravišanti yathā nadyaḥ samudraṃ ṛjuvakragāḥ I
tathaiva vividhā dharmāḥ praviṣṭāḥ kulameva hi I I

So when the *Tantras* were drawing from all earlier forms of *sādhanā,* we find in them side by side high philosophical speculations as well as primitive taboos, totemism and superstitions along with many of the extra Indian factors. The *Tantras* in which the primitive and extra Indian ideas dominate are naturally heterodox in character.

prescribe worship of Viṣṇu and other deities are more orthodox in comparison. This is due to the fact that the cult of the Mother Goddess, which more and more made an alliance with Śaivism, flourished mainly outside the orthodox brahmanical fold[1] and hence the *Śākta Tantras* to the largest extent, and *Śaiva Tantras* to some extent, show unorthodox influence. Again some Tantras like the *Rudrayāmala*, showing mixture of *Śiva-Śakti* worship, betray unorthodox characteristics.

At the time of India's independence only Arthar Avalon's (J. Woodroff) works were available on *Tantras*. My teacher, Prof. N.N. Chaudhuri initiated me to the *Tantric* studies. I did my doctoral works on the *Tantras* and *Purāṇās*. Presently there are dozens of good books on *Tantra*. Then during 1970-72, I got Commonwealth scholarship for higher studies in U.K. Then, I studied extensively and exclusively the original works on the *Tantras*. It gave me an insight into the *Tantric* lore and wisdom. The result is in hands before the scholars for comments. I do not claim to be a *Sādhaka*, but I had been true to my conscience. Whatever is good is a boon bestowed by the goddess and whatever is bad in this book is nothing but human limitation.

---

[1] Chattopadhyaya, *Sects,* ff. As regards the orthodox outlook of the *Kulārṇava* we may note the following *ślokas* :
sukhena sarvaphaladaṃ ko'tra tyajatyaho,
kulajño hi ca sarvajño vedaśāstrārjito'pi vā.
For the extolation of *vaidika-kārya* (v 34 *dakṣiṇe vāmasiddhānte vaidikādiṣu Pārvati*). For reference to the so-called *Cīnācāra* (x 63).

I am very grateful to the authorities of *Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan, New Delhi* who have included my book in the *Golden Jubliee of India's Independence* publication series. Then I am pleased to thank *Dr. K.K. Mishra, Director of the Sansthan* for contributing his *foreword* to my book. I am also thankful to the scholars, whose works I have consulted. I warmly thank all my family members who always encouraged me for academic pursuits. Lastly I am thankful to the men who have read proofs, published the books in record time and in a good get up. I seek the forgiveness of scholars for the mistakes which might have crept in even after the great precautions. In the end I prey to the goddess almighty for the welfare of all including myself.

सर्व-मङ्गल-माङ्गल्ये शिवे सर्वार्थसाधिके ।
शरण्ये त्र्यम्बके गौरि ! नारायणि ! नमोऽस्तु ते ॥

Independence Day. (Prof. Pushpendra Kumar)
15.8.98
Deptt. of Sanskrit
Delhi University. Delhi.

CONTENTS

Foreword iii

Introduction v

Ch-I Introduction to *Tantras* 1

Ch-II Principles of *Tantra* 36

Ch-III Definition of *Tantra* and the Numbers 54

Ch-IV *Vedic* Base of the *Śākta* Faith 77

Ch-V Philosophical Basis of *Tāntrik Śaktism* 99

Ch-VI The *Śaktipīṭhas* 116

Ch-VII The *Tāntric Mahāvidyās* 135

Ch-VIII The *Tantras* and the concept of *Kāli* 162

Ch-IX Nature of *Tāntrasādhanā* 170

Ch-X *Tāntric* worship with the *Makāras* 218

Ch-XI Esotericism in the *Tantras* 235

Ch-XII Indian Art and The *Tantras* 255

Conclusion 273

Bibliography 283

CHAPTER-I

Introduction to *Tantras*

The word *Tantra* is derived from the root *Tan* meaning to draw out, or *to spread.*[1] The significance is clearly brought out by the words like *Tantu;* what is spun out like a thread, a strand, and *(Tanu)* the body, in which the spirit has spread out or revealed itself. *Tantra* stands for ritual in general, the art of religion, to which every religion of the world, ancient and modern is associated with one form or other. We can say that ritualism has been the body (*Tanu*) in which the spirit of religion has most commonly manifested. As there is no smoke without fire, it would be in order to say that there is no ritual without religion, and wherever there is ritual, there is *Tantra.*

The balanced Indian opinion through the ages has always given a high place to *Tantra.* The word *Āgama,* which stands indifferently for the *Veda* and the *Tantra,*[2] has been adopted by common consent for indicating authoritative tradition.

---

1. Woodroffe-John, *Shakti* and *Shakta,* p.50.
   Kāsikāvṛtti (7.2.9).
   Shukla (DN) *Pratimavijnana* p. 113.
   Dasgupta, S.N. *Philosophical Essays,*
2. Sastri H.P.-A *Catalogue of Palm leaf and Selected Paper* Mss. Durbar Library, Nepal, Vol.II,p69.

The Tradition asserts that *Śruti* is two-fold, *Vaidikī* and *Tāntrikī*.[1] Lord Śrīkṛṣṇa in the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* speaks that religious practice or *Ācāra* is of three kinds, *Vaidika*, *Tāntrika* and *Miśra* (composite).[2] The generality of *Hindu* observance today could only be classified as *Miśra*, so inextricably are the *Vaidika* and *Tāntrika* elements mixed up in it.

Antiquity of the *Tantras* :

The *tantras* have been in prominence at a later date than that of the *Vedas* is accepted by all. Though the *Tantras* claim their origin from the *Vedas*, But the *Tantric* form of *Sādhanā* probably came into special prominence when on the one hand, the elaborate details enjoined by the *Vedic* sacrifices, taking a long-time to be performed, could not be accomplished by the people of feeble attainments, and when on the other, the *Upaniṣadic* method of acquisition of transcendent knowledge surpassed the intellects and equipments of the common people.[3] The *Purāṇas* were at this time preaching the *Bhakti cult* in order to place before the masses an easy method capable of being grasped and followed by all.

At that time the *Tantras* offered themselves to the people, containing within them the essentials of *Vedic* sacrifices and oblations, the essence of the

---

1. Kullūka Bhaṭṭa's commentary on *Manusmṛti*. 2.1
   Hārita's words quoted by Kullūka Bhaṭṭa.
   Kulārṇava Tantra-2.140.
2. *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* XI.27.7. *Mahābhāgavata* P.8.77.
3. D.N. Bose and Haldar, *Tantras : Their Philosophy and Occult Secrets*, p.2.

monotheistic philosophy of the *Upaniṣads*, the *Bhakti* cult preached by the *Purāṇas*, the Yoga method propounded by *Patañjali*, and the *Mantra* element of the *Atharvaveda*.

According to Carl Clemen[1] *Tantra means literary production dealing with religion, philosophy and natural sciences and is of a later date than the Vedic literature.* In its narrower acceptation it means the writings, which treat in a certain way, of religion, ritual, conduct of life, medicine, magic etc.[2] The history of the *Tantras* goes back to the 4th century and comes down up to 19th. According to Farquhar the period ranging from 500 A.D. to 900 A.D.[3] is called a *Śākta* period. It is a period when *Śaktism* was prevalent in India and the works like the *Purāṇas*, sectarian *Upaniṣads* as well the important *Tantras*, were written.[4] Orthodox people attribute a divine origin to the *Tantras* and thus claim a hoary antiquity. While some of these *Tantric* works may be fairly old, but all the *tantric* works cannot be supposed to be so. We may agree with Cintaharan Cakravarti about the date of the *Tantras*[5], when he says, that *as a matter of fact no particular age is possible to be assigned to the Tantra literature, which took a long range of time to develop. In reality the age of each individual work has to be*

---

[1] Brahma (N.K.), *Philosophy of Hindu Sādhanā*, p. 274.

[2] *Mahānirvāṇatantra*, IX.13

[3] Brahma (N.K.), *The Philosophy of Hindu Sādhanā*, p.247-75.

[4] Carl Clemen. *Religions of the world*, p. 125.

[5] *Vārāhītantra* : quoted by *Śabdakalpadruma*.
Chakravarti (C.), *Tantras - Studies on their religion and literature*, p.2.

determined on the basis of the available evidences, both internal and external.

Though the worship of the goddess, is amplified in the *Itihāsas* like the *Mahābhārāta* and in the *Purāṇas,* still the most extensive exposition is found only in the *Tantras*. It is called *Tantra* because it gives us extensive knowledge relating to the *Tattvas* and the *Mantras,* and leads us to *salvation.*[1] The special feature of the *Tantras* is that these are open to the persons of all castes and sexes and are not subject to restrictions of the *Vaidika* religion.

Let us not accept for a moment the facile theory that the *Vedas* and the *Tantras* conflict with one another. They do conflict, if at all, in the same manner in which *Śruti* and *Smṛti* conflict, and in which the *Vedas* and the *Purāṇas* conflict. The *Veda* is definitely supreme and eternal and if anything conflicts with it, either it must be explained or given up. The *Veda* is the world as idea in the cosmic mind of the creation, and the *Tantra* is an amplification of the *Veda*.

Śakti :

The supreme deity of the *Tantras* is known as *Śakti,* inseparable from *Śiva*. *Śakti* and *Śiva* are not two or double stars, but are ultimately one and the same. These are the two[2] modes of the manifestation of the eternal and infinite *Brahman,* as *Puruṣa and Prakṛti* (but not that of *Sāṅkhya*) i.e.

---

[1] Farquhar-*An outline of the religious literature of India.*

[2] Chakravarti, Chintaharan, *The Tantras - Studies on their religion and Literature,* p.19.

Mother and spirit, whom the *Tantras* describe as *Śiva* and *Śakti*.[1]

Tantras hold that *Śiva* and *Śakti* are inseparable like heat from fire, whiteness from milk, sweatness from sugar, luminosity from light, and weight from natural bodies.[2] It is the *Śakti* in the *Tantras* which is said to have brought the universe into existence.[3] She governs the universe and overwhelms us with wonder and awe. In other words it can be said that *Śakti* denotes *Brahman* and His divine energy, glorifying the mother aspect of the God.

1. *Śakti* is the reverse of the concept of *Śiva* who is *Sthāṇu*, and immovable. In one respect, it is the concept of Divine Energy in its static aspect, motionless, inhert, and without agitation; whereas, *Śakti* is the concept of Divine Energy in its dynamic aspect.[4] *Śakti* is the personification of the Divine Energy that has brought the universe into existence; and that preserves it from disruptive forces. In other words, *Śakti* is the creative and preservative energy of Brahman.[5]

2. *Śiva* is the emblem of the destructive forces that lie dorment in the universe.[6] Goddess *Śakti* is the fullest conception of *Brahman* in all its aspects, i.e. as Creator, Preserver, and Destroyer of the

---

[1] Woodroffe John, *Shakti and Shākta*,

[2] Dikshitar, V.R. *The Lalita Cult*, p.83.

[3] *Mahānirvāṇatantra*. 1.16.

[4] D.N. Bose and Haldar, *Tantras; Their Philosophy*, p.74.

[5] *Śaktisaṅgamatantra-Kālī Khaṇḍa*, 1.22; 98.92.

[6] *Mahānirvāṇatantra*, 4.10-11.

universe.[1] Creation is a mode of Divine existence, and Divine energy sustains the universe that binds the atoms with atoms. Again destruction is also an aspect of Divine energy that goes hand in hand with the creative energy. Thus the creative, preservative and destructive forces are but the three aspects of Divine Energy that exists in *Brahman*. *Mahāśakti* is the complete perception of *Brahman* with the three *Guṇas-Sattva, Rajas* and *Tamas*, and it is the personification of the creative, preservative, and destructive forces of the universe.[2]

Śakti is also the power of every God like *Indra, Viṣṇu* etc., in other words, she manifests herself as *Śakti,* power, force, or energy in everything and in every being. This universe is the manifestation of *Śākti*.[3] Now this is the concept of the *Śakti* conceived in the *Tantras*. A *Śākti* worships *Brahman* as *Śaktimān* or as He appears through the manifestation of His Divine energy, conceived in the *Tantras* as *Mahāśakti*.[4] God alongwith his Divine energy or attributes (which alone reveal us His existence), conceived as *Mahāśakti* or the fountain head of all energy, is perhaps the most profound philosophical concept of *Brahman,* preached in the *Tantrās*.

Kāli, the goddess of the *Tantras* :

The *svarūpa* of this *Mahāśakti* has been revealed in *Tāntric* texts, in the *Dhyāna mantras of*

---

[1] Mahānirvanatantra. 4.35-34

[2] D.N. Bośe & Haldar, *Tantras,* p.86.

[3] Mahānirvāṇatantra, 4. 33-81.

[4] *Ibid* 4.53;5.1.

Kālikā. The *Mahānirvāṇatantra* says that *She* is the great progenitor of the minutest and biggest things in the universe, and both the animate and the inanimate beings. This universe is begotten of Her free will, who is the beginning of all. The *Vidyās* and the *Trinity*, all owe their existence to Her. She is cognisant of the entire universe but none in the universe knows Her.[1] She is *Kālī*, *Tārā*, *Ṣhodaśī*, *Bhuvaneśwari*, *Dhūmāvatī*, *Bagalā*, *Bhairavī*, *Chinnamastā*, *Mātaṅgī* and *Kamalā*. She is surrounded on all sides by the gods and goddesses. She is at the same time the grossest and subtlest matter. She is devoid of all dimensions and yet takes various forms. For the fulfilment of the desires of the *Sādhakas*,[2] She assumes various forms. She appears at times to destroy the *asuras*[3] and assumes four hands and occasionally two, six, eight, ten or thousand hands. She wears various weapons for the maintenance of *Her* world. She is the great *Mother*, she being propitiated, all the gods and goddesses are propitiated. She is *Ānandā* itself, or a state of eternal bliss which cannot be conceived by mind or words. When *Parabrahman* or *Mahākāla* is desirous of creating the universe, the objective world emerges from *Him* through the centres of realisation or *cakras*.

He is ever-existence, pervades all and resides in all.[4] *Mahāśakti* is a *Mahāyoginī* connecting the links of creation, preservation and destruction and

---

1. *Devī Bhāgavata*. I.2.5-8.
2. *Prāṇatoṣiṇī* - p. 1079.
3. *Śaktisaṅgamatantra-Kālī Khaṇḍa* 2.41;11.
4. *Mahānirvāṇatantra* 4.10-13.

at the will of the *Mahākāla*, She creates the universe, preserves it and destroys it with all its animate and inanimate objects.[1] The destructive force also is one of *Her* aspects, as *She* destroys *Mahākāla* at the time of *Pralaya*, and *She* is called Kāli.[2] She is worshipped as *Ādyā*, being the beginning of all. After *Mahāpralaya She* alone remains as *Tamas* or *Avyakta Prakṛti* in a state, inconceivable by words or mind. Though formless, *She* assumes various forms; though without beginning, *She* is the origin of all,[3] and *She* is said to be the Creation, Creator, and the Commander of all.

The *Tantras* are unanimous in describing *Her*, as in a state of eternal bliss and playing in the bosom of *Śiva*.[4] Her feet do not rest on anything except the breast of *Śiva*. She resides in the cremation ground, where all the worldly objects are being reduced to ashes i.e. their seed stage. By *Her* independent will she begets the universe with all its diversifications, and again sucks them to *Her* breast in the twinkling of an eye. Unobstructed is *Her* motion and multifarious is *Her* disport. She is black in colour which means that all contradictions like black and white, cold and heat, possible and impossible, birth and death, merge at Her feet[5] and all distinctions disappear. *She* is sitting on a corpse which means that she exists in all inanimate objects. She has got terrible teeth yet *She* is conferring boons to all. She is open mouthed and yet is most affectionate of *Her* children,[1] bearing as in Her bosom all their belongings, physical, mental, and spiritual. She has a laughing attitude, yet engrossed in wielding the terrible spirit of *Time*. She possesses three eyes with which *She* can peep through the immeasurable *present, past* and *future*.[2] She carries in one of Her hands a skull, the receptacle of the *Unseen* and the seed of the universe. She bears in another hand a cutting instrument which breaks the seeds and puts them in full bloom in the form of the universe. Her hair is *dishevelled,* i.e. *She* is beyond all bondage and *Her* outspreading tongue lusciously sucks the blood coming out of the either corner of her fearful mouth. She wears a necklace of letters which are not other than the *Mātṛka Śaktis,* which constitute the universe and give it a shape. She is also described as being in a destructive mood standing on the bosom of the *Śiva* with a garland of several heads around *Her* girdle, in the cremation ground resounding with the howling of *Jackals,*[3] She is neither the knower nor the non-knower. She is *Ānandamayī* where both positivity and negativity meet. *Kālikā* or *Anandamayī* as She has been called, resides in the heart of *Mahākāla* (the Eternal *Time*) at *Her* independent will and appears as

---

[1] *Mahānirvāṇatdntra*. 4.16-18.

[2] *Jñānārṇavatantra*-16.3-30.

[3] *Yoginīhṛdaya* I.99, p.301.
Mahānirvaṇatantra 4.30-32.

[4] *Śaktisaṅgamatantra-Tārā Khaṇḍa*, 36.19-12.

[5] *Mahānirvāṇatantra*, 4.34.

---

1. *Yoginīhṛdaya* 114, p.228.
2. Bose and Haldar-*The Tantras,*
   Alain Danielou-*Hindu Polytheim,* p. 273.
3. *Kālītantra,* p.71.
   Mahānirvāṇatantra 2.4.

Mahāsaraswatī[1], *Mahākāḷi*, *Mahālakṣmī* to fulfil *Her* sport of *Creation*, *Preservation* and *Destruction*. She herself manifets these Goddesses and absorbs them in Her.[2] She is therefore worshipped in both the aspects, *viz*. as the bestower of all the possessions of life and also as the mighty *Śakti* that gives us *Kaivalya*[3] i.e. oneness with *Bṛahman*. This is all about *Kālī*, the goddess of the *Tantras*.

Daśa-Mahāvidyās

The more usual classification of the goddesses, however, is, as the *Mahā-vidyās*. These are held to be *ten* in number, and the number being probably selected to match the ten incarnations of *Viṣṇu*. These are called *Mahāvidyās* as sources of all that is to be known.[4] These are the most important deities of the *Tantras*. They have all different attributes, and are thus designated[5] :

1. *Kālī* (sometimes called *Śyāmā*), is black in colour, and fierce in character.
2. *Tārā*, is a benign manifestation.
3. *Śodaśī*, the goddess as a beautiful girl of 16 years old (also called *Tripurā*).
4. *Bhuvaneśvarī*
5. *Bhairavī*

---

[1] Alain Danielou, *Hindu Polytheism*, p.271.
Also *Kālītantra* quoted in the aforesaid book, p.462.

[2] *Śākta Pramoda*, p.27.

[3] *Mahānirvāṇatantra* 4.29.

[4] *Ibid*. 5. 137-140.

[5] *Kālikā Upaniṣad*,

6. *Chinna-mastakā*, a naked goddess holding in one hand a blood stained scimitar and in the other she owns her headless trunk.
7. *Dhūmāvatī*
8. *Bagalā* or *Bagalā-mukhī*
9. *Mātaṅgī*
10. *Kamalātmikā* or *Kamalā*

Of these the first two are especially the *Mahāvidyās*, the next five are the *Vidyās*, and the last three the *Siddha-vidyās*. As we have already discussed the chief of the *Mahāvidyās* viz. *Kālī*, now we give a brief description of the other *Mahāvidyās* in the above-said order.

Tārā :

In the *Tantras* she is a goddess, who leads to the other shore.[1] She has a dual aspect, the one fierceful and the other pacified and luminous. She is also worshipped in Buddhiśm. She is of dark blue complexion whereas *Kālī*, already mentioned is of dark colour.[2] *Tārā* places her left leg on the breast of *Śiva*, who is lying like a corpse. *She* is of short stature and *She* has a terrible appearance as dressed in tiger skin; and wearing on her neck a garland of severed human heads. *She* is in the prime of her youth and is adorned with *Pañcamudras*. She is possessed of four hands and her tongue is held out a bit and wears single braid of matted hair on her head.[1] The *Ṛsi Akṣhobhya* resides in her forehead. Her complexion is as effulgent as that of the newly rising sun. She is three-eyed and stands in the midst of a funeral pyre[2] and the range of her teeth seems to be terrible. She is laughing, engrossed in her emotion, and is decked with ornaments worn by the women. She takes her stand on a white lotus in the midst of a wide expanse of water.[3]

---

[1] Alain Danielou-*Hindu Polytheism*, p.268.

[2] For name see *Śabdakalpadruma* and *Tantrasāra*, two lists are there-one from *Mālinīvijaya* and another from *Mūṇḍamālātantra*.
See also *Śakti Saṅgamatantra-Sundarī Khaṇḍa* 1,101-102.

Ṣoḍaśī :

She is the third *Mahāvidyā*[4] and is as resplendant as the newly rising sun. She is also three-eyed and holds in her four hands noose, goad, arrow and bow. She is seated on a pedestal comprising of *Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Rudra, Īśwara, Indra* and *Sadāśiva* and the alter on which she takes her seat is *Śiva* himself. On the alter is *Mahākāla* with whom the *Mahāvidyā* sports in joy. She, the goddess of sixteen, is the power of Śiva and is ruling over the three worlds. She is identified with *Tripurasundarī*[5] also.

Bhuvaneśvarī

She is the fourth *Mahāvidyā*, and is considered the consort of *Śiva*. She takes care of the three worlds and feeds them, that is why she is called Bhuvaneśvarī.[1] Her marvellous radiance illumines the universe. The fruit in her hand shows her as the giver of the fruit of actions. She possesses a crescent on her forehead and a crown over head. Her breasts are full and surcharged with milk. She is three-eyed and her face is ever lit up with smile. In her two hands she holds the noose and the goad and in the other two the pose of granting boons and assurances to her devotees.[2]

---

[1] Alain Danielou-*Hindu Polytheism*-p.275-277.

[2] *Prāṇatoṣiṇī*, p.723.

[3] *Śaktisaṅgamatantra*-Kālī Khaṇḍa 2.37.39.

[4] *Tārātantra* - quoted in *Kalyāṇa-Śakti Aṅka*, p.224.

[5] *Kalyāṇa-Śaktyaṇka*, pp.224-226.

Bhairavī or Tripurabhairavī:

The fifth *Mahāvidyā*[3] is reddish like the morning sun. She is dressed in a silken cloth and wears a garland of heads on her neck. Her breast is anointed with *Sindhūra*. In her four hands she holds a rosary of beads, a book, and the poses of granting boons and assurances. She has a cresent on her forehead, Her three eyes are as beautiful as red lotuses, and there is a jewelled crown over her head. A milked smile plays on her lips.[4] As a goddess she is *Tripurabhairavī* while as a *Mahāvidyā* she is designated as *Bhairavī* only. This is a benign manifestation of *Śakti* and is considered the giver of knowledge.[5]

Chinnamastakā

The *Sādhaka* should concentrate his mind on a pure and fully blown lotus in the region of the

---

1. Alain Danielou- *Hindu Polytheism*, p. 464.
2. *Śākta Pramoda*-p. 176-178, 180-181.
3. Alain Danielou-*Hindu Polytheism*. p.279.
4. Ibid. pp.464.
   Śāktapramoda, pp 203.
5. Bose and Haldar, *The Tantra*.

navel. Within it is the solar region and surrounded by three lines, viz., *Sattva, Rajas* and *Tamas.*[1] Within that region is the goddess *Chinnamastakā,* who is as effulgent as tens of millions of the suns together. Her mouth is expansive, terrible to look at, with tongue emitting out. The Goddess is drinking the blood that gushes forth from her throats. Her hair is dishevelled and beautified with many varieties of flowers. In her right hand she holds a cutting instrument and wears a garland of human heads, She is naked and fearful in appearance. Her right leg is in front while her left leg is a little behind.[2] The Goddess *Chinnamastakā* wears a garland of bones and a serpent in the shape of a sacred thread. She is on a standing posture on *Rati* and *Kāma* who are in the attitude of sexual embrace.[3] Her appearance is that of a woman of sixteen years with heavy and rising breasts. On the left and right hand side of the Goddess are two *nāyikās* called *Ḍākinī* and *Varṇinī.*[4] They also drink the blood streaming out of the Goddess. *Varṇinī* is red in complexion, naked and with dishevelled hair. In her left hand is the severed head of a man, in her right hand a cutter and she wears a sacrificial thread made of a serpent. She is of a glowing splendour. She is also of sixteen years of age and *bedecked* with various ornaments, and a garland of bones. The effulgence of *Ḍākinī* on the left side of the goddess is like that of the

---

1. *Śāktapramoda,*
2. *Ibid.* pp.262.
3. *Ibid.* pp.228.
4. *Ibid.,* pp.225.

sun at the time of the termination of the *Kalpa*, resplendent like fire, and her matted hair sparkle like lightning. This *Ḍākinī* is of three eyes,[1] her rows of teeth are white, face looks terrible, in view of her frightful teeth and her breasts are heavy and proṃinent. This *Ḍākinī* is of very fearful countenance, of dishevelled hair and nacked. Her protruding tongue is big. She puts on a garland of human heads on her neck, and holds a human skull in her left hand and a cutter in her right hand. She also quaffs the blood gushing out in another stream from the neck of the Goddess. Both *Varṇinī* and *Ḍākinī* are serving the Goddess.

Dhūmāvatī

Dhūmāvatī is pale in complexion,[2] ever moving stern and of tall stature. Her cloth is also dirty, her hair disorderly and colourless, she is without teeth and her breasts are hanging. She is in the garb of a widow[3] and rides a chariot over which sits a crow. Her two eyes are stern without sight of tenderness. In one of her hands she has a winnowing fan and her other hand is in the attitude of granting boons. Her nose is big, and the body and eye crooked[4]. She is afflicted with hunger and thirst, of terrible *mien* and of quarrel some nature. She is the goddess of poverty, frustration, despair, and is generally identified with misfortune.[5]

---

1. *Shākta Pramoda*, p.227.
2. *Ibid.* p.229.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Śaktisaṅgamatantra-Tārā Khaṇḍa*, 30.23-24.
5. *Toḍalatantra*, Pāṭala 1.

Bagalā

The Goddess *Bagalā*[1] is seated on a throne, placed on an altar beset with gems, in a *maṇdapa bespanged* with gems and in the midst of an ocean of nectar. She is of yellow countenance and puts on a yellow cloth and is adorned all over with garlands. The Goddess holding the tip of the tongue of the enemy in her left hand,belabours him with a mace taken up in her right hand. She has two hands and is covered all over in yellow.[2]

Mātangī

The Goddess is of dark complexion[3] with a crescent on her forehead, and having three eyes. In her four hands she holds the sword, *Kheṭaka*, noose and goad. The Goddess is seated on a throne made of precious stones.

Kamalā

The complexion of the Goddess is as bright as gold.[4] Four elephants resembling four hillocks of gold are coronating the Goddess by holding four pitchers containing nectar with their trunks. In her four hands she holds two lotuses and shows postures of granting boons and assurances. Her head is decked with begemmed crown, she is wearing a silk cloth and is seated on a lotus.

Each of the goddesses worshipped by the *Śāktas* has a *Yantra*, assigned to her, which is sometimes placed in the centre of a lotus-diagram.

---

1. Alain Danilou, *Hindu Polytheism*, p.465.
2. *Śāktapramoda*, p.281, 287-288, 290.
3. *Śaktisaṅgamatantra-Tārā Khaṇḍa*. 30.25-26.
4. *Śāktapramoda*, p. 307,309, 310-311.

The *Śricakra* is a principal *Yantra,*[1] delineated in a diagram of this kind and then worshipped. It is supposed to represent the orbit of the earth, nine triangles being drawn within the circle to denote the nine continents. In the centre is the drawing of a mouth, which is believed to typify the female energy (*Śakti*) presiding over the circle. According to some authorities, even the Śaṅkarācārya was a *Śakti* worshipper as he is known to have placed a representation of the *Śricakra* has also been described in his *Saundaryalaharī.*[2]

The *Yantras* or mystic diagrams are thought to be quite effective[3] in their operation like the *Mantras,* and of course a combination of both is held to be absolutely irresistible. Salvation and supreme felicity in a future state is obtained by drawing a six sided or eight sided diagram and writing a particular *Mantra* underneath. *Triangular, Pentangular,* and *nine-triangled Yantras* are equally efficacious.

Kuṇḍalinī Śaktī Yoga:

According to *Śivasaṁhitā* there are four kinds of *Yoga : Mantrayoga, Haṭhayoga, Layayoga,* and *Rajyoga,* the *Yoga* through the rousing of *Kuṇḍalinī Śakti* is *Layayoga,* it means the piercing by the *Kuṇḍalinī, Śakti* of the six bodily centres or *Cakras* (also called *Padmas*-lotuses).[4]

---

1. *Shākta Pramoda,* p. 335,337.
   Śaktisaṅgamatantra-Tārā Khaṇḍa. 30.22b-23.
2. *Ibid.* p. 355; 357;361.
3. *Ibid.* p. 355; 357;361.
   Śaktisaṅgamatantra-Tārā Khaṇḍa 30.21-22.
4. Alain Danielou, *Hindu Polytheism,* p.359.

Yoga means that process by which the human spirit (*Jīvātmā*) is brought into near and constant communication with, or is merged, in the. Divine Spirit (*Paramātmā*) as the nature of the human spirit is held to be separate from, (*Dvaita*, or *Viśiṣṭāḍvaita*) or one with (*Advaita*) the Divine spirit. The *Śāktas* and *Advaitavādins,*[1] and according to them, identity of the two (*Jīvātma* and *Paramātmā*) is to be realised by the *Yogi*.

***Kuṇḍalinī*, as *Śabdabrahman*:**

All the *Māntras* are supposed to be the manifestations of *Kulakuṇḍalinī*, which is a name of *Śabdabrahman* or *Saguṇabrahman* in individual bodies. *Kuṇḍalinī* believed to be in the *Mūlādhāracakra*[2] (or basic bodily centre) is the cause of sweet,indistinct,and murmuring *Dhvani*, which is compared to the humming sound of a black bee. Thence *Śabda* originates and being *first* i.e. *Parā* gradually manifests upward as *Paśyanti*, *Madhyamā*, and *Vaikharī*, (the spoken speech).[3] The substance of all *Mantras*, being manifestation of *Kuṇḍalinī*, is consciousness (*cit*), manifesting letters and words. The letters of the alphabet, are called *Akṣara* because they are the diagrammatic representation, or *Yantra* of the *Akṣara*, i.e. Imperishable *Brahman*. This is realized, however,when the *Sādhak's Śakti* generated by *Sādhanā* is united with *Mantraśakti*. The different aspects of *Devatās* as presiding deities of *Mantras* are the manifestation of the gross (*sthūla*) form of

---

1. *Saundaryalaharī*, V.11. p.52.
   ed. Normaṇ Borwn, Harvard University Press, 1258.
2. Woodroffe, *Shakti and Shākta*, p.513.
3. *Śivasaṁhitā* V.14.

Kuṇḍalinī,[1] who is however extremely subtle. *Mantra and Devatā are thus onę and are particular forms of Brahman as Śiva* and *Śakti.*[2]

Nāda-Bindu-Kalā

From the *Sakalaparameśvara,* who has been produced from *Saccidānanda,* issued *Śakti,* thence came *Nāda;*[3] and from *Nāda* issued *Bindu,* the latter being perfected out of *Ardhacandra,* issuing out of *Nāda* and becoming slightly operative towards speakable (*Vācya*). The *Bindu* becomes threefold as the *Kāmakalā,* or creative will. This triangle of Divine Desire i.e. *Kāmakalā* is personified as the Great *Devi Tripurasundarī.*[4]

Six *Cakras*

Out of the six bodily *cakras;* five lower ones are situated within the spinal cord,a compound of grey and white brain nerves. *Mūlādhāra* is the lowest in the terminal, and in a midway position in the perineum between the root of the genitals and the anus. Proceeding upwards and controlling genitals is the *Svādhiṣthāna,* controlling the navel region i.e. abdomen is *Maṇipūra,* controlling the heart is *Anāhata* and controlling the throat is *Viśuddha.* Between the eyebrows is *Ājñā,* the sixth *Cakra,* and above them all in the cerebrum is

---

[1] Campbell (J), *Philosophies of India,* p. 570.

[2] *Śāradātilaka* I, p.12.
Mātṛkābhedatantra 3.4.

[3] *Yoginīhṛdaya,* I.36-38;40.
Vākyapadīya-Brahmakhaṇḍa 144. *Śivadṛṣti*-2.1-2.
Pratyabhijñahṛdaya, 8.p.18.

[4] *Prāṇatoṣinī,* p. 76, 299.

Sahasrāra, a thousand-petalled lotus, and the highest centre of manifestation of consciousness in the body.[1]

These six *Cakras* or lotuses have respectively four, six, ten, twelve, sixteen and two petals which are configurations made by the position of *Yoga-Nāḍis* at any particular centre. These *nāḍis* are not those, which are known to be *Vaidyas* or the medical *Śāstras*, but these are subtle channels (*Vivara*) along with which the *Prāṇic* current flaws.[2] The six *cakras* have their correspondences in physical body in the following nerve plexuses commencing from the lowest, the *Mūlādhāra*[3]. The Sacrococygeal plexus, the Sacral plexus, the Solar plexus (which forms the great junction of the right and left chains *Iḍā* and *Pingalā* with the cerebro-spinal axis) and connected with this is the Lumbar plexus. Then follows the Cardiac plexus (*Anāhata)*, Laryngeal plexus and lastly the *Ājñā* or cerebelum identified by some with the Pineal Gland, the centre of the third or *spiritual* eye. It has two lobes and above this the *Manas Cakra* or sensorium consists six, the *Soma Cakra*, the middle Cerebrum and lastly is the *Sahasrāra* the Upper Cerebrum. To a great extent these localizations are yet tentative. The six *cakras* themselves are vital centres of consciousness, within the spinal column.

---

1. *Jñānārṇavatantra* 13.46.
   John, Woodroffe, *Shakti and Shākta*, p. 471.
2. *Jñānarṇavatantra* 10.I-7.
   Śāradātilaka 1.7.
3. *Ibid*.108.

Samādhi :

The Practitioners of this *Yoga* hold that it is higher than any other system and that *Samādhi* (ecstasy) attained thereby is more perfect. The *Samādhi* of *Laya-Yoga* however is said to be *Savikalpasamādhi*, and that of *Rāja-Yoga* is *Nirvikalpasamādhi*.[1] In *Mantrayoga*, worship and devotion predominate and in the *Samādhi* of *Mantrayoga* the state of *Mahābhāva* is attained, marked by immobility and speechlessness.[2] While in *Haṭhayoga*, contemplation is made on the Light.

In *Haṭhayoga*, when *Samādhi*, called *Mahābodha* is attained; respiration ceases and the *Yogi* is without any sign of animation[3]. In *Layayoga* the *Samādhi* called *Mahālaya* attained there is no outer consiousness but the *Yogi* is immersed in the Ocean of Bliss. In *Rājayoga Nirvikalpasamādhi* is attained; there is *Nirvikalpa* or detachment (*Vairāgya*) from the world corresponding the four *Yogas*. The *Mantra*, *Haṭha*, *Laya* and *Rājayogas;* all these are *Mṛdu* (of high degree) and *Para* (Highest).

Mukti :

Not only the *Mantrayogi* but also the *Haṭhayogi avails himself of the Kuṇḍalinīyoga* for liberation. The remaining two *Rājayoga or Jñānayoga* are termed as *Dhyānayogas*.[4]

---

[1] *Prāṇatoṣinī* p851-857.
Bose and Haldar, *The Tantras*, p.184.

[2] Woodroffe, J.; *Śakti and Śākta*, p.110.

[3] *Ibid*.

[4] *Gheraṇḍasaṁhitā* VI.17.

Thus there are two main lines of *Yoga*, namely *Dhyāna* or *Bhāvanāyoga* and *Kuṇḍalīyoga*. In *Dhyāna yoga*, *Smādhi* is attained through detachment from the world and meditation leading to cessation of all the mental activities or the uprising of pure consciousness unhindred by the limitations of the mind[1]. This meditation is sometimes aided by auxiliary process of *Mantra or Haṭhayoga* (other than the rousing of *Kuṇḍalinīśakti*). The degree to which the unveiling of conciousness is effected, depends upon the meditative powers (*Jñānaśakti*) of the *Sādhaka*, and the extent of his detachment from the world.[2] Here is no rousing and union of *Kuṇḍalīnīśakti* with the accompanying bliss and acquisition of special powers (*Siddhī*). In both the *Yogas* bodily consciousness is lost, but there being no union of the central bodily powers with the supreme consciousness, the *Dhyānayogi* does not possess the particular kind of enjoyment (*Bhukti*). There is certainly a difference between the *Bhukti* of the *Divyayogi* and the *Vīrasādhaka*, the latter has only a reflection of the bliss on the physical plane a well being up of the true bliss through the deadening coverings and trammels of matter. The so-called *Mukti* of the *Vīraṣādhaka* is only figurative. It is the *Divya-yogi* only who has both, *Bhukti* and *Mukti*[3] in his hand.

Pañcatattvas or *Makāras* :

Generally it is thought that in *Vāmācāra*, woman plays an important role. But this is only partially true in the case of those *Sādhakas*, who worship with *Śakti* according to *Vāmācāra* rites. But amongst the *Vāmācāris* there are even *Brahmacāris*, *Sādhāka*, and followers of the *nāthas* who never indulge in this type of *Śakti* worship. The *Kālamukhas* and the *Kālaviṣas*, worship the *Kumāris* only upto the age of nine and the *Brahmakaulas* refrain even from wine and meat. Now this means that this kind of worship is restricted to one section of the *Vāmācāris*, namely the *Vīra* classes while the *Paśu* and *Divya* classes are prohibited performing it. There are still further restriction that a *Sādhaka* should perform this worship with his own wife, *(Svakīyāśakti)* and it is only in the cases when there is no wife that he may take some other *Śakti* for the purpose of ritual worship only[1].

---

[1] *Śaktisaṅgamatantra, Kālīkhaṇḍa*, 1.129-ṛ.

[2] *Ibid*. 1.121-122.

[3] *Mātṛkābhedatantra* 8.25-26.

About the use of five *Makāras* in the worship, we can very well say that it is a continuation of ancient *Vedic* usage and not a modern invention. The *Tāntrikas* have advanced an argument about this *Pañcatattvasādhanā*, that *Siddhi* can be attained by means of those very things which are the cause of men's downfall.[2] The *Tantra* says that the *Pāñca tattvas* are of various types, viz. of real (*Pratyakṣa*) type, substitutional type (*Anukalpa*) and esoteric (*Divyatattva*) type. As regards tne second, even a vegetarian would not object to meat which is in fact ginger and coconut water for wine.[3] As for the esoteric *Tattvas* they are not material articles or practices, but the symbols for *Yogic* processes[1]. In case of the first i.e. the real *Tattvas*, the *Tantras* contain injunctions against unrestrained indulgence of flesh, wine and woman.[2]

---

[1] *Mahānirvāṇatantra* 15. 109-110.

[2] *Ibid*. 14.112-114

[3] *Ibid*. 1.55; 4.39-43.
Woodroffe-*Śākti and Śākta*. p.499.

A *Sāḍhaka* is to practise these rites, for gaining the highest object, namely the unification with *Śiva* or God, leading to emancipation. These are considered the initial steps leading towards the final goal. The expression *Pañcamakāras* derives its name from the *initial letters of the ingredients* used in *Tāntric* form of worship. This particular sect of the *Tāntrikas* holds that these *Pañcamakāras* constitute the very life of the *Tantras*, without which they cannot achieve the spiritual end.[3]

Though outwordly these rites appear much abhorent, but there is a great esoteric meaning behind these. All these, wine, meat, fish and woman are objects of temptation and it is very difficult to overcome them. Worship of a young damsel as a goddess, and taking of wine for the purpose of concentrating his mind on the object of devotion only, is something very difficult, and requires the training of the mind. The devotee here has to relinquish his own desire and self and convert the various pursuits of enjoyment into instruments of spiritual discipline.

In case you have to take these in reality, the *Tantras* have prescribed the *Sādhanā* ceremony

---

1. Mahānirvāṇatantra 1.57; 51-56.
2. *Ibid*.6.14.
   M.B. Jhaveri-*Critical and Comparative Study of Mantraśāstra*, p. 57-58.
3. Kulārṇavatantra V.68.

which means the purification of all these five ingredients, before a devotee offers these to the deity or he partakes himself. The *Tantras* deal in detail about the purification of the *Makāras*[1] as well as of the heart of the *Sādhaka*. As we cannot offer anything with an impure heart to the deity, who is the object of our devotion, so we must purify everything and offer it without any selfish desire.

Esoteric meaning of the five *Makāras is like this :*

1. *Madya*-the nectrine stream that issues from the cavity of brain, is called *Madya* or wine.[2]
2. *Māṃsa* : By this term we mean the control of speech-which is only possible in case of the *Yogīs*.[3]
3. *Matsya* : By fish we mean the system of respiration, drawn in and sent out. So the worshipper of fish means one who has controlled his vital breaths, this is called *Prāṇāyāma*.[4]
4. *Mudrā* : It means the residing place of the soul in the body, and one who acquires the knowledge of this charming soul is the worshipper of *Mudrā*.[5]

---

[1] Śaktisaṅgamataṇtra-Kālīkhanda 9,16-33.

[2] *Ibid*. 9.16-17.
Prāṇatoṣnī, 1049.

[3] *Kulārṇavatantra* 6.13-16.
Prāṇātoṣni, p. 1050.

[4] *Śaktisangamatantra, Kālīkhaṇḍa* 9, 18.

[5] *Prāṇatoṣnī* p.1042.
Mahānirvāntantra 6.1-16.

5. *Maithuna* : the most important of all these is the practice of *Maithuna*. It is observed like thus : Co-habitation is at the root of creation, preservation and destruction : It is regarded as a great principle in scriptures and it achieves all ends and confers the most difficult knowledge of *Brahman*.[1] The meaning of *Maithuna* here is the recitation of the various attributes of God or unification with the God.

Thus we can say that this *Pañca-makāra* worship is not at all corrupt in spirit as it is supposed to be. The object is very high and these are various instruments of spiritual discipline.[2]

Philosophy of the *Śāktatantras* :

The *Śāktatantras* hold that the Supreme Reality is *Parāśakti*. That *Śakti,* before the manifestation of the universe and the souls, remains in a state of Quiesence or Repose, devoid as it were of the light of self-reflection implied in the nature of *Caitanya*.[3] The unmanifest universe remains then absorbed in *Chaitanya*. This pre-creative state of Supreme *Śakti* is beyond the so-called *Parā Vāk* of the *Yogins*, which is the universal matrix and from which the *Vedas* and the worlds emanate.[4]

---

1. *Prāṇatoṣṇītantra*, p.1041.
2. *Ibid*. p. 1042. *Āgamasāra*.
   Chakaravarti, C., *The Tantras*, p.41.
3. *Āgamasāra*.
4. *Ibid*.

This transcendent *Śakti* is co-eternal and co-substantial with *Parabrahman* which is ineffable, indescribable, unlimited and immeasurable.[1] Only with the grace of the causal *Śakti* or *Mother* of the worlds, this above said transcendent state can be reached. Hence the *Tantras* say that every form of spiritual discipline is a sort of propitiation of the universal power.[2]

The *Parāśakti* on this eternal plane has an eternal vision of this eternal universe, not as an object outside of itself but as its very self. This eternal vision is therefore a self-vision of *Śakti* beyond the limitation of time, space and causality and is a state of *Perfect*, *Quiet* and *Peace*. The *Parā Vāk* or *Parā* is synonymous with the equilibrium of *Śiva* and *Śakti*.[3] The Supreme *Śakti*, as one with *Śiva*, transcends all *Tattvas* and as differentiated from, is the source of all *Tattvas* and is identical with them. In its later aspect it is the eternal matrix of the worlds and is of the Essence of Joy.[4]

Hence the *Śākti* has a double aspect; and in one it is identical with *Śiva*.[5] At this stage *Śiva* alone shines. There is another aspect, in which the *Tattvas*, the universe made of the *Tattvas* and the *Devatās* appear from it, both simultaneously and successively.[1] *Śaktism* advocates a position intermediate between absolute monism and qualified monism. *Śiva* is the static Absolute, *Śakti* is the conscious energy of *Śiva* who creates the world through *Śakti*.[2]

---

[1] *Prāṇatoṣṇītantra*. p 1343.
Dikshitar. *Lālita Cult* p. 79.

[2] *Prānatoṣṇī* p. 982.
Chakravarti (C), *The Tantras-Studies of their religion and literature*. p. 42.

[3] Saraswatī Bhawan Studies, Vol.X, p.22.

[4] *Vākyapadīya* of Bhartṛhari, p. 1-6, Part I, *Brahmakāṇḍa*.

[5] *Mahānirvāṇatantra*. 3.6-9.

Śivā and *Śakti* as *Brahmaṇ*, are inseparable and non-different from each other.[3] *Śakti* is the supreme energy (*Parāprākṛti*) of *Śiva*, the supreme self.[4] It is conscious, Omniscient and the fountain head of all powers.[5] It is the source of all knowledge. It is both, subtle and gross, mainfest and unmanifest, formless and multiform.[6] The *Śakti* creates, preserves, and destroys the world at the mere will of *Brahman*.[7] In other words *Śiva* creates, preserves and destroys the universe through his *Śakti*.[8]

The *Brahman* pervades the whole world and it depends upon him. All the things are real with the reality of *Brahman*. He is menifested in the world[9] and creates it through his energy (*Māyā*) i.e. his *Prakṛti*. It is imbedded in *Śakti*, his supreme concious energy. Though *Śakti* is formless, it

---

1. Saraswatī Bhawan Studies, Vol, p.23.
2. *Prapañcasāratantra* 2.43.
   Brahma (N.K.), *The Hindu Sādhanā*, p.286.
3. *Śaktisaṅgamatantra*, *Kālīkhaṇḍa* 1.98-99.
4. *Ibid*. 1.102-103.
5. Saraswati Bhavan Studies, Vol.X, P.29.
   Saktisaṅgamatantra, *Kālīkhaṇḍa*, 1.113-116.
6. *Mahānirvāṇatantra* 4.25-29.
7. *Śaktisaṅgamtantra*, *Kalikhanda*, 2.11.
8. *Mahānirvāṇatantra* 4.10.
9. *Ibid*. 4.14.

assumes diverse forms through *Māyā*. Thus *Śaktism* combines absolute monism with the *Sāṅkhya* theory of evolution.[1]

The *Brahman*, however, can be approached not merely as the Lord *Parameśwara*, but also as *Parameśwarī*, the Supreme *Śakti*. For she is none else but *Himself* in another pose. *Thou art the Parā Prakṛti or Brāhman, and from thee has sprung the whole universe, O Śiva, it is mother,*[2] She is the matrix of all that exists : Whatever there is in this world of things, with and without motion, from *Mahaṭ* to an *atom*, owes its origin and is dependent on thee[3].

It is said in the *Tantras* that for the help of the worshippers, the good of the world, and the destruction of the *Dānavas*, she assumes various forms.[4] And it goes on to prescribe the best mode of worship, a swift course of *Sādhanā* for a man to effect his liberation from ignorance and achieve union with the Supreme consciousness, that is she. She manifests herself multitudiously and sports in the richness of her creation from a million centres of enjoyment. By a progressive identification of his own consciousness with larger conciousness of the world Mother, the *Sādhaka* participates in the *Līlā*, has a joy of things and in that very process of self-identification and merger grows into the nature of the Divine Mother. All the elements that make for the sustenance, growth and luxuriance of life are drawn upon in their acme and used towards this fulfilment.[1]

---

[1] *Mahānirvānatantra* 5.10-15, *Kālītantra* 9.22.

[2] *Ibid*. 4.30-34.

[3] *Ibid*. 4.23-27.

[4] *Ibid*. 5-195.

The Philosophy of the *Tantras* is a well-adopted re-interpretation of the doctrines, expounded by the *Upaniṣads*. The philosophy is highly monistic in tone[2] and the dual aspects of *Śiva and Śakti* merge ultimately in an inscrutable unity. An identity in difference or unity in diversity has been the last word of the *Tantras*. No difference has been shown here between *Jīva* and *Śiva*. *Ātman* conditioned by *Upādhi or Māyā* is called *Jīva,* but becomes *Śiva,* the moment it thinks *Śivo'ham.*[3] i.e. *I am Śiva.*

Ātman is freed from those accidental attributes. The words of *Śiva* himself,a *Jīva* is entitled to eternal emancipation when he is liberated from the bondage of *Saṁsāra,* by the force of self realisation.[4] The *Tantras* have touched the keynote of the *Advaita* philosophy by accepting identity between *Jīva* and *Brahman,* and have repeatedly stated in clear terms that the highest form of *Yoga* is the attainment of unity of *Jīva* with the supreme soul.[5]

The *Tantras* have always insisted upon the supreme importance of *Jñāna*. Knowledge in its purest form is said to be the only way that leads to final emancipation. It has emphatically been asserted that *Mukti* is attainable only by *Jñāna* and

---

1. *Mahānrvāṇatantra* I4.127; 4.34; 5.19.
2. Sinha (J.N.), A *History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II, p.746.
3. *Mahānrvāṇatantra* 4.10.
4. *Ibid.* 4.11.
5. *Ibid.* 4, 15-16.

not by any other means.[1] The *Tantra* have only voiced the eternal truth of the *Upaniṣads,* when it says that *Jīva* once liberated is not born again.[2] Most of the *Tāntras* have exalted the supremacy of *Brahmajñāna* in clear terms. The *Tantras* have recognised two kinds of knowledge, one derived from the *āgamas* and the other obtained from spiritual experience.[3] The *Rudrayāmala* maintains that a *Tantric* worshipper ultimately becomes the same as *Brahman* through the help of *Brahma-jñāna,* and that there is no self-elevating religion like *Brahma-jñāna.*[4]

The *Tantras* affiliated to the *Sākta* school have explained the association of *Śakti* with *Puruṣa* as the basic principle of creation. The same truth has been revealed by *Śaṁkara* just in the beginning of his *Ānandalaharī*[5] :

The mysticism of *Yoga,* has also been dealt with elaborately in the *Tantras.* The object of practising *Yoga,* as conceived by *Tantrikas,* is to acquire the power of visualising the Supreme Soul within the limitations of the individual soul[6]. One who longs for *mukti* is directed to think himself completely lost in the all-pervading soul, and to a *yogin,* the world of perception vanishes into the absolute.[7]

---

1. Pandit (M.P.), *Studies in the Tantras and the Veda,* p.21-29.
2. Brahma (N.K.), *Philosophy of Hindu Sādhanā.* p.292.
3. *Kulārṇavatantra,* 9.42.
4. *Ibid.* 14.7.
5. *Ibid.* 9.30.
   Śaktisaṅgamtantra, Kālīkhaṇḍa 1.117.
6. *Kulārṇavatantra* 1.105.
7. *Tantrarājatantra* 36.

Quite in agreement with the *Vedānta* standpoint, the *Tantras* have maintained dual aspect of *Śiva*, namely *saguṇa* and *nirguṇa*. It is said further that from *saguṇa Śiva*, characterised by *sat*, *cit* and *ānanda*, arises *śakti* and from it evolves *nāda* and from *nāda* comes out *bindu*. The *Tantras* have shown a sublime ideal of spiritual experience which is in a sense different from all other forms of *Sādhanā*.

Last of all we can sum up that the philosophy of the *Tantras* is a reconciliation of the *Absolute* monism of the *Upaniṣads* and the dualism or qualified monism preached by some of the *Purāṇas*.[1]

Nature of the *Tantric Sādhana* :

The *Tantric Sādhanā* combines in it the elements of *Yoga*, worship, prayer and meditation on the identity of the individual & the *Absolute*.[2] The *Tantras* accepted the monistic philosophy of the *Upaniṣads*, appreciated the value of worship and prayer along with the *Bhakti* schools, and like the Yoga system, laid great emphasis on the intimate relations between the body and mind.[3] They preached an easy and short method of spiritual achievement, and sought to provide persons of all grade of equipment with suitable courses of discipline.[4] The *Sādhanā* contains in it, the elements of all the important forms of *Sādhanās* viz. *Yoga* and *Bhakti*, *mantra* and *Homa*, and *Jñāna* and *Karma*. All these when combined, go to show

---

1. *Kulārṇavatantra*. 109.
2. *Rudrayāmalatantra*.
3. *Ānandalaharī*-1.
4. *Kulārṇvatantra* 9.30.

that the *Tantric Sādhanā* is the synthesis of all that was good in the various forms of *Sādhanas*, and that is why its promise to its followers, of the easy and speedy attainment of the end, is justifiied.[1] The *Tantras* promise to give to the *Sādhaka* not merely liberation (*mukti*) but also enjoyment (*Bhukti*), i.e. not merely final beatitude (*Niśreyas*) but also progress (*Abhyudaya*) in the world.

It is through the efforts of *Sādhaka* and the grace of the spiritual guide (*Guru*) that the Serpent-power (*Kundalinīśakti*) which generally lies dorment at the foot of the spinal column, becomes awakened and joins the Absolute, who resides in the *Sahasrāracakra*, i.e. the highest centre of the cerebrum.[2] The word *Kuṇḍalinīśakti* is used to indicate the spiritual power or Energy of the individual human being.

The most important feature of the *Tantric Sādhanā* is that the *Tantras* recommend the combination of *Kriyā* and *Bhāvanā* i.e. action with imagination. Here it differs with *Vedānta*, which prescribes that realisation can be had through meditation (*Bhāvanā*) alone. The *Tantras*, though declaring the unity of *Jīva* and *Śiva*, differ from the *Vedānta* school, where the *Śivatva* of *Jīvā* is an established fact, while according to the *Tantras*, the *śivatva* (absoluteness) is to be attained through *Sādhanā*.[3]

---

[1] *Śaktisaṅgamatantra, Kālīkhaṇḍa*

[2] Brahma (N.K.), *Philosophy of Hindu Sādhanā*, p.275.

[3] Śaktisaṅgamatantra 1.56.

In the *Tantras*, special importance is assigned to the *Mantras*.[1] The deity is identical with the *Mantra*, which is the infallible means of liberation. The *Tantras* believe in the eternity of *Mantra* and designate it as *Śabdabrahman*. The *Bījamāntras* are not mere words, but are a concentrated thought of great power, revealed to the *Sādhaka* in the hour of his profound illumination. The *Mantrajapa* is prescribed[2] for the attainment of the desired objects.

The *Tantras* lay great emphasis on *Upāsanā*, and this seems to be derived from the *Purāṇas*.[3] The worship of the deity, and the recitation of hymns in honour of the deity, forms a very important feature in the *Tantras* as well as in the *Purānas*. The worshipper identifies himself in editation, with the deity he worships[4] and places before himself the fully blossomed condition represented by the deity as the ideal to be realised. Here we see that according to the *Tantras*, the realisation of the identity between the *Jīva* and *Śiva*, is the supreme ideal.[5]

The *Tantras* recognise three distinct states of *Sādhanā* viz. Purification (*Śuddhi*), illumination (*Sthiti*) and unification (*arpaṇa*), corresponding roughly to Karma, *Bhakti* and *Jñāna*.[6] The individual has to undergo various process in order to purify himself. This purification is to be attained through both, *Bhāvanā* (meditation) and *Kriyā*, and through the harmonious working of both, mind and body. The real worship of *Śiva*, is only possible by oneself, whose heart has also freed from all impurities. The last stage is of complete surrender.

---

[1] Brahma (N.K.), *Philosophy of Hindu Sādhanā*, p. 83.

[2] *Mahānirvāṇatantra*, 2.20-22.

[3] *Kulārṇavatantra* 2.21; 36.

[4] *Ibid*. 3.96.

[5] Brahma (N.K.), *Philosophy of Hindu Sādhanā*, p.277.

[6] *Kulārṇavatantra* 9.43.

● ● ●

CHAPTER-II

Principles of Tantra

According to the Indian tradition each Age has its Scripture, *Yugaśāstra,* governing and leading the life of the people in the rightful direction. In the *Satyayuga* (Golden Age),[1] says the *Kulārṇava Tantra,* the Scripture is *Śruti,* the Revealed Word, the *Veda;* in the *Treta* (Silver Age), *Smṛti,* that which is remembered and promulgated by the Ṛṣis in the form of *Śāstras* and *Śmṛtis,* in the *Dvāpara* (Copper Age), the *Puraṇas,* treatises which convey the doctrines of the *Vedas* and *Smṛtis* in a popular garb, myth and story; in the *Kali* (Iron Age), the *Tantra.*[2]

The *Tantras* are considered by their adherents as the *Śāstra* supreme for the current age of *Kali* when mankind is labouring under a heavy load of *Adharma, Untruth* and *Unrighteousness.* It is not practicable in this age, they point out,[3] to practise

---

1. In the first Age, *Dharma* is conceived to be full in stature, in the second it declines by a quarter, in the third by half and in the last, the *Kaliyuga, Dharma* exists only a quarter.

2. *Kṛte śrutyuktācāras tretāyāṁ smṛtisambhavaḥ* ।
   dvāpare tu purāňoktam kalau āgama kevalam ।।

3. The Aryan life no longer exists in which every event, from the conception in the womb to the cremation of the body, was accompanied by *Vaidika Mantra.* A

all the rituals and austerities enjoined in the *Vaidik* system. Neither the individual capacity of man nor the condition of the collective environment of modern societies is favourable to their practice. For men of such an age the *Tantraśāstra* provides the most practicable and sure guide for the achievement of the goal of life which lies not only in its liberation from the hold of Ignorance, *mukti*, but also in an ample satisfaction of its basic urges for self-existence, self-affirmation and the delight of their fulfilment, *bhukti*.

The *Tantraśāstra* has certain distinctive features which give it a wider appeal than the systems of the *Veda*. In the first place, it is catholic and open to all irrespective of their class or sex. No one is excluded from the shelter of the *Tantras* because of his birth; even a *Caṇḍāla* has a right to be initiated. The *Māhānirvāṇatantra* declares: *That law Kaula who refuses to initiate a Caṇḍāla or a Yavana into the Kauladharma, considering them to be inferior, or a woman, out of disrespect for her, goes the downward way. All two-footed beings in this world, from the vipra to the inferior castes, are competent for kulācāra.* Women are as eligible for initiation as men are; not only that, some of the *Tantras* lay it down that initiation taken from a woman-*guru* is more

---

heavenly body which through the control of the passions, has become a suitable vehiclefor the development of *Brahma* - knowledge according to *Vaidik* rules, is now-a-days impossible of achievement. Foreseeing this, *Śiva* revealed the path of *Tantra*, the *Sādhanā* of which is framed to meet the needs and circumstance of the *Kaliyuga*, and varying temperament and proficiency of those who live in it. (P.68).

effective than from a man, becuase the woman represents directly the world-mother who is the object of all worship.

Secondly, one need not have to undergo long periods of preparatory training as insisted upon in the *Vedic* and *Vedāntic* lines of discipline before one is adjudged fit to be initiated into the regular *sādhanā*. Not many are in a position to observe the various *vratas* and equip themselves with psychological purity, mental discrimination and detachment born of strenuous study and contemplation. The *Tantra* does not pitch itself so high in its demands. It recognises that men are in all stages of development; there are different natures and temperaments and each is to be led by the path, natural to him. For this purpose it classifies men into three broad classes according to whether they are predominantly governed by *Tamas, Rajas* or *Sattvaguṇa* and prescribes different modes of discipline for them. To use their terminology, men are of three natures or temperaments: *paśubhāva,* animal type, *vīrabhāva,* hero-type, and *divyabhāva,* godly type and their lines of progress - *ācāra*-differ accordingly. Be it noted, however, that these types are not fixed; it is possible, by effort and progress, to pass into the next higher and eventually the highest stage even to one who starts at the lower end of *Paśubhāva.*

Further, the *Tantraśāstra* is what is described as a *pratyakṣaśāstra,* a science which, like medicine and astrology, is verifiable at every step. It is a rational science based upon a doctrine or a set of doctrines which lends itself to be tested by any individual at any stage. Prior, faith in the word of the *Śāstra* is not indispensable. *Practice what we say and see the results for yourself, then faith will be born* - says the Teacher of the *Tantra*.

There is besides, a greater stress here on the practical side of the *Śāstra* than in the traditions which exalt Knowledge, *Jñāna*, above Action, *Kriyā*. Knowledge is of course in dispensable but for the right knowledge to dawn and be properly received and assimilated there is needed a precedent discipline which readies the system, a *Sādhanā* with its outer and inner ramifications which prepare and mould all the parts of man to the utmost degree of receptivity. The *Tantra* provides for a graded system of *Sādhana* according to the competence, *adhikāra*, of the seeker. *Pūja*, external worship with various *upacāras*, like flower, incense, offering etc, is the first stage; next comes *Japa*[1], repetition of *Mantra* according to prescribed procedure; then *Dhyāna*[2], mental contemplation, adoration; the last and the highest is the *Brahmabhāva* or Brahmasādhanā, attainment of the knoweldge and feeling that one is *Brahman* and All is pervaded by *Brahman*.

---

[1] *Meditating on the form of the Devatā denoted by the Mantra, Japa should be made in the mind. (Bhūtaśuddhi tantra).*
A mantra should be repeated with faith, devotion, attention, submission, and perception of the Divine image in the mind. (*Kulārṇavatantra*)
Japa is of three kinds : Vācika (by audibe words), Upāṁsu (lips and tongue moving, but inaudible to the person making japa), and Mānasika mental (lips and tongue not moving). Japa has the supreme virtue of gradually withdrawing the mind from other thoughts and impressions, and fixing it on the Divine image. When concentration by this means is perfected, the consciousness of the sadhaka is transferred to the Mantra-devatā. This is called Mantracaitanya (awakening of Mantra.) (pp.434-435.

[2] *dhyāna* is of two kinds, *sthūla* (gross) and *sūkṣma* (*subtle*). *Sūkṣma* or supersensuous, is Thy sound-body

The Tantra is remarkable also for another reason. It does not ignore the claims of the earth, the here, and peach flight to the heavens of bliss elsewhere. For the Tantrik this world here is as much real as the worlds elsewhere. All are manifestations of the *One Śakti*, One Divine. And if the Divine is real and can be the sole object of our seeking, equally real is the world manifested by the Divine[1] and to realise its full meaning is the purpose of our human birth.[2] The Tantras

---

(mantramayaṁ deham); Sthūla is meditation on Thy image, *which is made up of hands, feet, etc... (Yāmala) Dhyāna is of two kinds, sarūpa (having visible image) and arūpa (not having visible image). Thy arūpadhyāna is beyond the cognizance of speech and mind; it is unmanifested, all-pervading, incapable of being pointed out as this or that. (Mahānirvāṇatantra).*

[1] *The Tantric sādhaka does not-in this unlike the Vaidik sādhaka-see a hell in the saṁsara. The hateful and hideous pictures which the Vaidik sadhaka has drawn of the Saṁsāra...is enough to create a revulsion..Tantric sādhakas have discovered the play of the waves of Brahma-Bliss in this very Saṁsāra and have pointed out, as it were with a finger, that the very process of cause and effect which obtains in the Saṁsāra is in a direct manner the stairway of Sādhana.* (P.144).

[2] *Birth in the human body is rlightly considered to be an event of crucial importance in the evolution of the soul. It is only the human being who gets the chance to exercise his faculties consciously and choose his destiny. He alone, among all created beings, can evolve in the direction he prefers. There is no birth like unto the human birth. Both Devas and Pitṛs desire it. For the Jīva the human body is of all bodies the*

declare that the universe is not an illusion; it is an expression of *Brahman*. It is the *material and the field for sādhana*. Rightly perceived it reveals, not veils *Brahman*.[1]

---

most difficult to come by. For this it is said that human birth is attained with extreme difficulty....of the Jīva's eighty-four lakhs of *births the human birth is the most fruitful. In no other birth can Jīva acquire knowledge of the truth. Human birth is the stepping-stone to the path of liberation.* (Viśvasāra Tantra).

[1] *The hall of sorrow, the vale of tears, the hall of torments and other such names by which schools of transcendental philosophy disparage the world, have no place in the Tantra. The Tantra is the Breath of Divinity, and the world is evolved from that breath. The Divine Mother (call Her Father or Father-Mother as you choose) is in every molecule, in every atom, in all things which constitute the world. In fact, She is the causeless Cause of whatever is; She is the manifested Brahman. The world is the playground (Līlākṣetra) of the All-blissful Anandamayī. The world is neither an illusion nor a non-reality; nor is it under the government of the Ruler of Hell.. The Tāntric sādhaka, by his method of worship, is led from the outset to feel, and then by a higher process of self-culture to realise, the All-blissful Mother in the universe-nay to regard the universe as the Mother Herself. Every man and every woman is to him the Mother Herself; every living object is to him an object of obeisance. His thought and conduct are made to flow in that all-loving and all-reverencing channel. Training his mind thus, the sadhaka, far from finding the world to be a vale of tears, of sorrow, and of suffering, views it as the very Kaśmir of subjective and objective beauty. Every man and woman-nay, all living things-are glowing with Divinity. This state of mind not only quenches the thirst of his lower nature, but spiritualises its animal tendencies; not only does it buy him up with fresh energy to pursue the Path but he attains liberation (Mukti)...The man of the world who professes Tantrism has every faith in the reality of the world. To him it is not an illusion nor an evil, and therefore he exerts his*

Again, as Sri B.K. Majumdar observes, *The Tantra is the only Divine Revelation which throws open the gates of acrane nature to those who have the courage to peer into it. Man, in his onward path, must dive deep into nature's heart to discover what he, and the universe of which he is a component part is. The method of spiritual self-culture leads him, step by step, to an acquaintance with nature's supersensuous beings, high and low, and teaches him how to utilize the services of the high, and to ward off the evil influences of the lowy. This knowledge is of essential importance to the sojourner on the Path; for the evil spirits throw every manner of obstacles to impede his march and encompass his ruin; whereas the good spirits would gladly help him on if he but knew how to obtain their help...The investigations of the Tantrik into the inner temple of nature reveal to him many secrets both of an objective and subjective nature, including those of the human mechanism. It is thus that he is a theurgist and thaumaturgist, alchemist, herbalist, metallurgist, physician, astrologer, and astronomer. The Tāntrik's alchemy crossed the ocean and reached Europe; his chemistry discovered ages ago many truths, some of which have dawned upon European scientists within but recent times. He was the first in the world to use mercury, snake poison, and the metals as medicine. His system of medicine has superseded that of the Āyurveda. His science of Breath is still a mystery to the Europeans. Last, though not the least, there is what may be called his science of psychophysical culture, which renders the physical body obedient to the will, and thus by certain postures not only enables him to ward off and cure diseases, but to control the mind.*

---

utmost to make it the happy lap of the Mother, which it really is (B.K. Majumdar, in his Introduction).

The Tantra, in fine, is from its very nature an Encyclopaedic science.

In the *Tantra,* Monism and Dualism both take their due place as truths valid at different stage of the development of human consciousness. *The Tantra harmonises Vedāntic Monism and Dualism. Its purpose is to give liberation to the jiva by a method through which monistic truth is reached through the dualistic world. It immerses its sādhakas in the current of divine bliss by changing duality into unity, and then evolving from the latter a dualistic play, thus proclaiming the wonderful glory of the Spouse of Paramaśiva in the love-embrace of Matter (jaḍa) and Spirit (caitanya)...Śiva has therefore said: In the world some desire non-dualistic, others dualistic knoweldge, but those who have known My truth have passed beyond Dualism and Non-Dualism.* (Sir John Woodroffe).

In the philosophy of the *Tantras,* especially the *Śāktatantra* the *Ultimate Reality* is the *Transcendent* described as *Brahman*. But this *Brahman* is not a Void to which we give a name. *Brahman* is a potent *Ineffable*. When *Brahman* is self-moved to manifest something of what is contained in itself, there is a stir, a movement, *spanda,* which takes the form of a double poise : the *Reality* as *Śiva* and the same *Reality* as *Śakti,* the poise static and the poise dynamic. This movement proceeding on the twin bases of the Śakti and Śiva, the *Supreme* in its dynamic status and the *Supreme* in the static, develops into the play of the action, reaction, and interaction of the twin *principles* of existence culminating in the emergence of the *36 Tattvas* and the subsequent evolution of the universe. Thus the universe is a manifestation by the *Supreme* as *Śakti* out of its own *Being* for the delight of *Her* play with the *Supreme* as the *Lord*. The same play, *līlā*, that results in the manifestation of the universe totally, is repeated in each individual form. Each thing, each man is an embodiment of the Śiva-Śakti and is a field for the delightful play of the *Lord* and the *Spouse*. Only man is not aware of it. He is separated from this real nature of himself by a veil of ignorance and hence he misses that delight of existence. To remove this veil and restore man to a direct awareness of his being an individual centre for the *Līla* of the Divine and give him his rightful share in the joy of it is the aim of the *Tantra Sādhana*. It is only when he is thus awakened to the presence of the *Supreme Śakti* within himself and everywhere in the world around that he can partake in *Her* Joy of manifestation in this *variegated* creation.

But it is not enough to have this knoweldge as a concept in the mind. It is to be *realised* in oneself and made part of one's normal, active consciousness. In other words, man has to be reborn in the status of the divinity, an identity with the *Śakti* that pervades all and transcends all. The process of many steps that has been designed and perfected by the seers of the *Tantra* for this end is the *Tantra Sādhanā* or the *Tantra Marga*.

GURU

The first requisite to take this path is of course the *Guru*, Teacher. He is one who is already on that *path*, who has realised in himself, fully or in part, the truth that is sought and who is in a position to give a start to the seeker. This he does by imparting something of his own power[1] of *Tapasyā*, a part of what he has received and built up within himself, to the disciple - *Śaktisañcāra*, transmission of his own *Tejas*. The *Guru*,[2] says the *Śāstra*, should not be looked upon as a mere human teacher; he should be adored and waited upon as a representative of the Divine, indeed as the Divine itself in human form. For, as the *Yoginī tantra* says:

---

[1] The *Śāstra* speaks of two kinds of *Śaktis* of the Guru: *Śakti* of spiritual nature and the *Śakti* of knowledge, technique etc., known as the inner and the outer *Śaktis*.

[2] Some of the *Tantras* make distinctions among the *Gurus*. The *Picchilatantra*, for instance, states: *Gurus are of two kinds according as they teach and initiate. The first is the initiating Guru (Dīkṣāguru) and then follows the teaching Guru (śikṣāguru). The initiating Guru is he from whom initiation in Mantra is taken, and the teaching Guru is he from whom Samādhi, Dhyāna, Dharma, Japa, Stava, Kavaca, Purascaraṇa, Mahāpurascaraṇa, and other various forms of sādhana and yoga are learnt after initiation. Of these two he is the supreme Guru, from whom the great Mantra oof Iṣṭadevatā has been heard and learnt, and by him alone Siddhi can be attained.*

It will be interesting to follow the classification of Gwru given by the *Kulāgama:*

Instigator (preraka), or who instigates initiation by explaining its utility and that of sādhana; Inaugurator (sucaka), or he who inaugurates sādhana and its aims; Explainer (vācaka), or he who expolains sādhana and its object; Director (darśaka), or the person who definitely and clearly shows what sādhana is and its object; Teacher (śikṣaka), or he who teaches sādhana and its object; and Illuminator (Bodhaka), or the person who imparts knowledge of, and concerning, sādhana and its object by tearing asunder the ties of the heart. Know Gurus to be of these six kinds, of which the first five kinds are, as it were, the effects of the last as the cause.

He who is the first Lord and is called Mahākāla is the Guru, O Devi ! in all Mantras. None else is the Guru. He is verily the Guru of the Śaivas, Śaktas, Vaiśṇavas, Gāṇapatyas, Moon-worshippers, Mahāśaivas and Sauras. He and none else is the promulgator of Mantra. At the time of imparting Mantra, O Daughter of mountain, He manifests Himself in him who imparts Mantra. Hence O Devi! verily there is no Guruship in man...Because He manifests Himself in the human Guru, therefore the greatness of the human Guru is reveal in all the Sastras.

The importance given to the *Guru* in the *Viśvasāratantra*:

The appearance (mūrti) of Guru is the root of Dhyāna, the lotus-foot of Guru is the root of Pūja, the word of Guru is the root of Mantra, and the grace of Guru is the root of Siddhi.

MANTRA

This initiation, this communication of impulsion to the disciple, is usually done through a *Mantra*. The *Mantra* is selected by the Guru after ascertaining the seeker's nativity, temperament, constitution - the elements in which he is strong and those in which he is deficient - and the goal aimed at. The *Mantra* has a power of its own, power of the *Truth* it embodies; to that is joined the personal spiritual power of the Guru. The seed of *sādhana* is planted in the being of the disciple through the vehicle of the chosen *Mantra*. We do not enter here into the philosophy of Sound, *nāda*, which is at the base of the *Mantraśāstra* that plays such a preponderant part in the *Tantra*. The author of this treatise deals at length with the subject and emphasises the importance of potency of the Word, the *Mantra*, not only in the manifestation of all Name and Form which have issued out of Sound, but also as providing the body for the *Devata*, the Godhead, to manifest and reachout to the aspiring *sādhaka*.

These *Mantras*, sacred syllables or words, are invocations to the *Devatās*, the Deities. The *Mantra* may be a regular prayer in words or a combination of syllables (*bīja-mantra*, seed-*mantra*). These leters are the sound-bodies of the respective *Devatās*; they are reproductions in human speech, as approximate as possible, of the original sound-vibrations that accompany the manifestation of the *Devatās* on their own plane of existence. These sounds when repeated in the prescribed manner act as invocations to the Deities.

DEVATĀS

Now coming to the subject of *Devatās*, Godheads, it must be clearly understood that while each *Devatā* is a distinct power and personality itself, all of them are emanations, several manifestations of the *Supreme Śakti*, the *Divine Mother*. In the course of this creation She has manifested *Herself* in diverse forms, but there are some personalities of *Hers* which have a central and lasting significance in the evolution of the universe. In the *Tantra* they are designated as the *Daśa Mahāvidyās*, *Ten Great Forms* in which She has incarnated and through which *She* is best adored and approached. They are: *Mahākālī*, *Tārā*, *Soḍaśī*, *Bhuvaneśvarī, Bhairavī, Bagalā, Chinnamastakā, Mahātripurāsundarī, Dhūmāvatī and Mātaṅgī.*[1]

The *Tantraśāstra* gives detailed descriptions of the forms of these *Devatās* (or *vidyās*) as they have been revealed to the seers in the course of their *Tapasya,* and are visioned by those whose inner eye has opened. Each *Devatā* has her *Dhyāna Mantra* which gives a description of the form, limb by limb, in which *She* is to be contemplated and adored in mental worship. The *Śāstra* recognises that this inner contemplation and worship is not practicable for all. For the majority of people a physical form, an external material symbol is needed. And this it provides in the form of Images, Idols or Symbols like the *Yantra,Maṇḍala, Liṅga, Śālagrāma* etc.[2]

---

1. *The dark-coloured form, with terrible eyes, which Thou dost see before Thee is Kāli. She who is above Thee of Śyāma colour is Mahāvidyā Tārā, the very image of Mahākālā. The less, destitute and very frightful Devi whom Thou dost see on Thy right side is, O high-couled Mahādeva, mahāvidyā Chinnamastā. O Śambhu the Devi on Thy lift side is Bhuvaneśwarī. She who is bahing you is Devi Bagalāmukhi, aestructress of foes. She who appears as a widow on the southest is Devi, Mahāvidyā, Dhūmāvatī, a great Iśwarī. The Devi on the south-west is Tripurasundari. In the north-west is Mātaṅgi, and in the north-est Mahāvidyā Ṣoḍasī, a great Iswari. She who is below thee is Bhairavi. (Mahābhāgavata.)*

2. *For the purpose of Brahman-worship it is necessary to worship a form which has been assumed by the Devatā to show Himself to Sādhakas and to bestow favours on them. The image, again, must not be a production of the sādhaka's imagination only. Such images alone should be worshipped as are images of forms actually assumed by Her.*

The *Tantra-Tattva* being written in the later half of the last Century when it was a fashion among the revivalist and reformist movements, like the *Brahma-samāj* and *Ārya-samāj*, to condemn image worship as superstition and a relic of primitive mentality, the author has devoted a considerable portion of the book in meeting their arguments and establishing firmly the position of the institution of *Idol* or Image worship in an unassailable manner. Put briefly the truth of the matter is this: An idol, *mūrti*, by itself is indeed a material object like any other. But it is not as such that the *upāsaka* worships the *Mūrti*. neither is it that out of devotion or in simple faith he imagines the *Mūrti* to be the *Devatā* and offers worship to it. The *Murti is worshipped only when* it is enlivened and vibrates with the presence of the *Devatā* and the *Śāstra* prescribes the mode of so enlivening it. The sādhaka first evokes in his mind the image of the Deity as laid down in the *Dhyana Mantra* and dwells upon it, letting it suffuse itself in his own consciousness. Thereupon he breathes out of his illumined consciousness on the Idol repeating the prescribed *Mantras* and thus transmits the consciousness, *caitanya*, of the Inner *Devatā* to the outer *Mūrt*i. It is then that life is established, *prāṇapratiṣṭhā*, in the *Mūrti* and worship offered to the Godhead that dwells in it. After the worship is over, there is a reverse process of *withdrawal* by which the presence or the infused consciousness is drawn back from the *Mūrti*, the *saṁhāramudrā*. To quote a helpful passage from the *Gandharvatantra*:

Next, after performing Prāṇāyāma, the sādhaka should take handfuls of flowers. The Devi should never be invoked without handfuls of flowers. The sādhaka who has controlled his Prāṇa will meditate on the Parameśwari as above described in his heart, and seeing by Her grace that image manifested within and the image without. Next, the energy of consciousness (tejas) within should be taken without by means of the Vāyu-bīja (Mantra-) with the breath along the nostrils, and infused into the handful of flowers. thus, issuing with the breath, the Devatā enters into the flowers. The sādhaka should then establish the Devatā in the image or Yantra (Diagram) by touching it with those flowers. So long as the work of establishing the Devi in the outer image of Yantra is not accomplished, the sādhaka should continue to hold those flowers of meditation in his hand...After drawing Her into the flowery Yantra by means of the Trikhaṇḍa Mudrā, take the Mother of the world, who is all brilliant and forceful energy, out of that flowery Yantra by the force of the invoking Mantra and place Her within the Pīṭha (Image or Diagram).

Worship

Worship of the *Devatā* is of two kinds, inner and outer. But the object of both is the same: a progressive realisation of one's identity with the *Devatā*. The Deity can be truly worshipped only by oneself becoming the Deity, *devo bhūtvā devaṁ yajet*. First the mental, inner worship and then the physical, outer worship.[1] The mode of worship varies in the different extant traditions as also in the same tradition according to the stage of the development of the worshipper, the circumstances, etc. The author discusses this at great length dilating upon each stem and element[1] that enters in the ceremony of worship. He quotes from the seventh chapter of the *Gautamīyatantra* :

---

[1] Outer worship should not be done without first performing mental worship, for without inner worship outer worship is fruitless. (*Sanātkumāratantra*).

To go to the house of Devatā, cleanse the place where the Devatā is seated, and remove from the person of the image the pastes, flowers, garlands, and so forth attached to it. This is called abhigamana. Upādāna is the name given to the cutting of flowers and the like and the collecting of materials such as incense, sandal and so forth. Ijyā is the name for the worship of the Iṣṭadevatā, with offerings of materials such as pādya (water for washing the feet) and so forth, accompanied by Mantras, according to the Śāstra, after Bhūtaśuddhi. Prāṇāyāma, mental worship and so forth. Svādhyāya is the Nyāsa, name given to the doing of Japa, according to the Śāstra of the Great Mantra, consisting of the name Kṛṣṇa, reading its Sūkta, Stotra, singing the name of Hari, and studying the spiritual Sastra, in their respective order. Yoga is the meditation of Iṣṭadevatā in one's mind. O man of good deeds! these are the five forms of worship. They grant the fruit of sāmīpya, sārūpya, sādṛśya and sāyujya in succession : abhigamana and upādāna grant sāmīpya, Ijyā grants sādṛśya, svādhyāya grants sārūpya, and yoga grants sāyujya.

The Gautamīyatantra ordains worship of Viṣtṇu. Consequently, it speaks of Japa of the Mantra, consisting of the name of Kṛiṣṇa, and singing of the name of Hari. But this is merely an indication of a Sādhaka's duty

---

[1] *Bhūtaśuddhi, nyāsā, mudrā, upacāra, etc.*

relating to his Iṣṭadevata, be he a worshipper of Śakti or of Śiva, or of any other Devata.

Thus far regarding the ritual aspect of the *Tantrasādhana* there is another and more significant facet of the practical knowledge bequeathed by the *Tantraśāstra*, and that is the *Tantric Yoga*, the psycho-physical discipline systematised and perfected by the adepts to awaken the hidden faculties in man and to develop them to their fullest potential in order to ensure a rapid liberation of his being and nature into the blissful embrace of the *Śiva-Śakti* embodied in him. Now here, however, mention may be made of outline of Tantrasādhana: *Inner Yajña* is accomplished in this way. Mother *Kulakundalinī*, the World-consciousness living in the womb of the *Mūlādhāra* lotus, is awakened. She is taken along the *Suṣumnā* path, piercing on the way throughout the six cakras *Mūlādhāra*, *Svadhiṣṭhāna*, *Maṇipūra*, *Anāhata*, *Viśuddha*, and *Ājñā*. She and the *Jīvatma* residing in the heart are united with the supreme *Tattva* of Paramaśiva residing in the petals of the thousand-petalled lotus *Sahasrāra*. The *Māyik* elements of the phenomenal *Mayik* world are merged in the *Parambrahmatattva* of *Śivaśakti*. the elemental products are the twenty-four *Tattvas* of earth, water, fire, air, ether, smell,. taste, sight, touch, sound, nose tongue, eye, ear, skin, voice, hand, foot, anus, genitals, *Manas*, *Ahaṅkāra*, *Buddhi*, and *Prakṛti*. The *Sādhaka* thinks to himself that in their *Mayik* existence they *exist* as seed, and thus meditating offers a full *Āhuti* of the *Brahmāṇḍa* in Brahman Itself. Next, with the help of purified *Mind-Prakṛti*, existing in the form of seed (*bīja*), Mother *Kulakundalinī must, after reawakening the dualistic Tattvas* from their supreme union or undifferentiated non-dualistic *Tattva* of Śakti and possessor of *Śakti* or *Prakṛti* and *Puruṣa,* be re-established in Her own place in the womb of the *Mūlādhara* lotus, and there united with *Svayaṃbhūśiva.*

● ● ●

CHAPTER-III

Definition of *Tantra* and the Numbers

The expression, *Tantra* signifies sacred scriptures which were revealed in the form of dialogue between Śiva and Pārvati for the welfare of the people of the *fourth cycle of human ages* (*Kaliyuga*).[1] It is not, however, possible to fix the connotation of the generic term *Tantra* with any amount of precision. Broadly speaking the *three* specific types of scriptures command authority with the three different sects. The *Saṁhitas* contain the secret doctrines of the Vaiṣṇavas,the *Āgamas* those of the *Śaivas* and the Tantras those of the *Śāktas*.It is, however,worthy of remark that this *distinction* has not been unfrequently passed under the generic term. Furthermore the *Tantra* admits of twofold classification, viz., *Āgama* and *Nigama*. In *Āgama* Pārvati is the enquirer and Mahādeva furnishes answer. But in *Nigama* Mahādeva is the enquirer and Pārvatī gives answer to clinch the doubt. It is interesting to observe that the authors of the *Tantra* consider both *Āgama* and *Nigama* as significant epithets. They have offered interpretation of each initial letter constituting these two expressions. So far the term *Āgama* is concerned, the initial letter, *Ā* stands for *āgata* which means emanated from the mouth of *Śambhu; ga stands for gata* which signifies entrance into the mouth of the daughter of the *Himālaya* (the devi or Pārvati) and the letter *ma* stands for *mata,* that is, to which approval has been accorded by Vāsudeva. In an identical manner in the expression, *Nigama, the preposition, ni stands for nirgata* which means emanated from the mouth of the daughter of the Himalaya; the letter, *ga stands for gata, that is, entrance into the ears of Śiva; and the letter, ma* stands for *mata i.e. confirmed by Vāsudeva.*

---

[1] *Krte śrutyukta ācārastretayāṁ smrtisambhavam* I
Dvāpare tu Purāṇoktaṁ kalāu āgamabothitam I I
Kulārṇavatantra

The etymological meaning of the word, *Tantra* is a *warp*. And the figurative sense of it is a series without a break or a pause. But in the sphere of religion it signifies ordainment on ritualism. Further this expression was extended to the system of secret doctrine and ultimately to the treatises laid down with meticulous precision. The great Śaṅkarācārya has mentioned the names of *sixty four Tantras* and only a few of them have survived the tide of oblivion. The names of the authoritative works on *Tantra,* which are available at the present day, may be set forth as follows:- The *Mahānirvāṇa, Kulārṇava, Tantratattva, Kālika, Rudrayāmala, Śaktisaṅgama, Tantrakaumudī* and the *Śāradātilaka*. The *Tantras* have been accorded the fourth position in the scriptural texts of the *Hindus*. The preceding three distinct types of scriptures pass under the names of *Śruti, Smṛti* and *Purāṇa.* Despite the fact that the *Tantras* are integral part of the *Purānas*, their *greater* antiquity is not liable to dispute. It has authoritatively been laid down that Dattātreya who is regarded as an incarnation of the *Hindu trinity*, namely, *Brahmā*, *Viṣnu* and *Maheśvara* is the real author of the *Tantras*. The profound significance of it lies in the fact that all the sacred books of the *Hindus* which receive the designation of *Tantra* are direct revelation of the three divinities who occupy the position of Supreme importance in Hindu pantheon. But it has, however, already been referred to above that the *Tantras* have been handed down in the shape of a dialogue between *Śiva* and *Pārvati*. And it ostensibly professes to reveal the secret and mystical doctrines which are to be practised by their devotees. It has also been stated that it is the central or fifth mouth of *Śiva* that delivered the message of *Tāntrik* cult for the welfare of mankind. It has been emphatically stressed that these *Tāntrika* doctrines and practices should not be revealed to the person un-initiated. It is to be verbally communicated by the *Guru* to his initiated disciple. The *Tantra Śastra* may be quoted for its confirmation. *The Vedas, the Śastras and the Purāṇas are like a public woman, but the doctrine revealed by Śambhu i.e., the Tantra remains veiled like a chaste housewife.* The obvious import of it is that under no circumstances the secret doctrines of the *Tantra* should be disclosed to the *laities*.

Kullūka Bhaṭṭa in his course of commentation on first verse of the second Chapter of the *Manusaṁhitā* has expressly stated that *Śṛuti* admits of a twofold classification, namely,(1) *Vaidikī* and

(2) *Tāntrikī.*[1] It is remarkable that they have overriden even the Vedas in different parts of India where religious rites and ceremonies are governed by the Tantras. There are numerous Tantrika schools with their age-old traditions and the distinctions inter se remain obscure and unintengible beyond the esoteric circle of adherents. The ritualism of the Tantras advocated by the *Dakṣināc̄arins* is in conformity with the injunctions of the *Vedas*, while that of the *Vāmācārins* is indirect conflict with them. It is undeniable that the sphere of the influence of the *Tantra* remains unchallenged even in the circle of those who are adherents of different creeds and faith. The Tantra in laying down its doctrines and rules of religious practices is chiefly guided by humanitarian consideration. It does not recognize distinction of colour, caste, creed or sex. It is free from all parochial injunction and as such stands in sharp contrast with the Vedas. Even the *Śūdra* and woman are not debarred to participate or outclassed in matter of performing religious rites and ceremonies enjoined by the *Tantras*. The *Tantra* has shown its profound reverence towards woman by offering to her the most exalted position. Woman has been invoked as the mother of the universe.[2] It is she who bears the designation of *Māyā*.[3] It is she who creates this

---

[1] *Vedaśastrapuraṇāni sāmānyagaṇikā iva* ।
Yā punaḥ śāmbhavī vidyā guptā kulavadhūriva ।।
Tantrasāra (Ed. R.M. Chatterji) p.691.

[2] *Śrutiśca dvividhā vaidikī tāntrikī ca*
Kullūkabhattas *Tīkā* on *MS*, II, I.

[3] *Vidyāḥ Samastāstava devi bhedāh. Striyaḥ samastāḥ sakalā jagatsu.* Mrk. Purāṇa.

creation: it is she who preserves this creation; and it is she who destroys this. She is also called Jagadambā, that is, the mother of the universe. Unreality is not aligned to Her. There is nothing in her creation which may be regarded as *evanescent*. All things created by Her are imperishable and remain permeated with the perennial reality borrowed from Her. This cosmic order which owes existence to Her has not sprung from dust and it will not return to dust. The beings of both the terrestrial and celestial regions are equally victims of temporal temptation and earthly desires before Her. She is equally bestower of earthly happiness and emancipation. Women of all classes are direct incarnations of this mother of universe. The *Tantra* considers all women as embodiment of *Śakti* and has warned that even the slight insult to them will be a deadly sin. *Whoever ill-treats a woman, incurs the indignation of Jagadambā*; and the act of showing reverence to her is verily tantamount of offering adoration to Jagadambā *herself*. The *Mahānirvāṇatantra* has banned the custom of *Satī*. It has enjoined that even a woman may be a *Guru* and initiation by her results in the accretion of increased spiritual benefit. And it does not stand in need of elaboration that all these directives of the *Tantra* are in direct conflict with the *Vedic* injunction. It will not be out of place of mark that this exalted position which has been accorded to woman has not parallel even in the West. The status of spiritual teacher of a woman has not been recognized in any religious system of the world.

The contents of the Tantra: The glorification of the Supreme. Speculation on the problem of the creation and destruction of the cosmic order. Elaboration of the process of worship of the deities. Arrangement of beings into different categories. An account of planetary system. Narration of the different orders of worlds and hells. Description of the six centres of human body. Prescription of religious duties for the different ages and stages of human life. The elaboration of sacraments and consecration of the idol of deity. Elucidation of the mystic diagrams (*yantras*). Symbolical movements of fingers. Different forms of spiritual exercises and adoration. Consecration of tanks, wells and temples. Enumeration of sacred places. Description of mute muttering of mystical and secret letters. Elaboration of religious rites and ceremonies including *puraścaraṇa* and *ṣaṭkarmasādhanā* and contemplation.[1] In short they give information on all branches of knowledge and may be favourably compared with the encyclopaedia of the modern times.

The Date of The *Tantras*

We now propose to deal with the problem of the date of the *Tantras*. A section of western scholars deliberately has affirmed that the *Tantra* is of recent origin. They are of opinion that these works were written either in the 6th or 7th century of Christian era. We have intentionally refrained from introducing controversial points which are likely to confound the whole issue. The others hold that the *Tantras* are of recent origin, since they have prescribed the adoration of *Śakti*. So far as the *Vedas* are concerned, there is the *Sarasvatīsūkta*, the *Yajurveda* contains the *Lakṣmī-sūkta* and the Tenth *Maṇḍala* of the *Ṛgveda* has the *Devīsūkta*. The *Chāndogya* and *Talava-kāra Upaniṣads* have narrated the account in which Umā, the daughter of the Lord of mountains taking her seat on the back of a lion, appeared before Indra and other deities and declared in a firm voice that all their activities and movements become possible by virtue of the great power (*Mahāśakti*) which belongs to Her. The *Śrīmadbhāgavata* has ordained for the adoration of Pārvatī. It has been stated there that Gopīs invoked the mercy of goddess Kātyāyanī. In the *Mārkaṇḍeya-Purāṇa* has been extolled the glory of Devī. The *Purāṇas* have eulogized her immense power. Innumerable verses may be quoted from the *Padma*, *Brahma*, *Brahmavaivarta*, *Skanda*, *Bhaviṣyat*, *Kālikā* and *Devi Purāṇas*. The worshipping of Durgā in the season of autumn has been enjoined in some of the *Purāṇas*. Are the Western scholars inclined to believe that the *Vedas*, *Upaniṣads* and the *Purāṇas* are all recent productions inasmuch as they contain explicit reference to the worship of *Śakti* ?

---

[1] *Tvam vaiṣṇavi Śaktiranantaviryā. Viśvasya bījam Paramāsi māyā. Ibid.*

It has already been referred above that the mass of the religious scriptures of the *Hindus* has been traditionally classified into four distinct branches, namely, the *Śruti*, *Smṛti*, *Purāṇa and Tantra*. It is the *Śruti* from which is derived the authority of the last three varieties of the sacred writings. In the event of conflict amongst them the overall supremacy of the *Śruti* prevails. To tell the truth, it is the teaching of the *Śruti* that has been merely elaborated in the succeeding three varieties of religious treatises in order to confirm it for the respective ages (*Yugas*). The *Tantra* is esteemed as the fifth Veda and is considered superior to *Smṛti* and *Purāṇa*. And all *Śāstras* are inferior in authority to the *Veda*. Yet the religious practices, rites, and ceremonies which have been prescribed in the *Tantra* supersede the *Vaidikācāra* in the present *Kali* age. The *Tantra* has revealed the heart of the *Veda* and claimed to be an integral part of it. The *Kulārṇavatantra* has stated in the clearest term that *Śruti, Smṛti* and *Purāṇa* are intended for the first three ages, namely, *Satya, Tretā* and *Dvāpara;* and to the *Kali* age has been assigned the *Tantra* for answering religious requirements. The objection that the *Tantras* are bereft of the authority of *Śruti, Smṛti* and *Purāṛa* is according to the orthodox view. Since all *Śāstras* are regarded as eternal it is only their revelation that may be regarded as successive. Words become manifested by means of letters or sounds. But the inner essence of words is to be found in the *sphoṭa* which is eternal and indestructible. It does exist even before the articulation of the words or letters manifesting them. It is undeniable that the revelation of the *Tantra* postdates the three varieties of scriptural texts mentioned above. But it should not be lost sight of that the same *dharma* has been advocated in the four consecutive ages, namely, *Satya, Tretā, Dvāpara* and *Kali* by four distinct varieties of religious scriptures. The *Tantra* has not propagated a religion which has no sanction in the *Vedas*. The elaborate process of the *Vedic* ritualism fell into destitude with the passing away of the time. Those who were proficient in sacerdotal lore became the rarest of the rarity. And as a sequal to this a necessity was felt for the simplification and abridgement of the process of the *Vedic* rites, ceremonies, sacrifices and sacraments in order to make it in tune with the spirit of the time. This accounts for the appearance of the *Tantra* to meet the religious requirements of the orthodox *Hindu* community. It has been reiterated that the *Tantras* are part and parcel of the *Veda* and as such has been accorded equal rank with it. The *Tantras* also bear the designation of *Āgama* which in its turn signifies the *Veda*. So these three expressions are interchangeable and *vouchsafe* their internal unity. In course of time several creeds came into existence on the basis of *Āgamic* teaching. So far the fundamental doctrines are concerned, there existed complete harmony amongst the different religious communities which profess allegiance to the *Āgamas*. It is only in respect of the observance of rituals and comparatively unimportant details that there existed divergence in the different religious sects. The offering of oblation to fire which figures prominently in the *Vedas* is to be encountered in the *Tantras* also. The hymns which were recited during the performance of *Aśvamedha* sacrifice are equally uttered at the time of consecration of the he-goat during the performance of *Tāntrik* worship. The drinking of wine as prescribed by the *Tantra* brings back to memory the ritualism of the *Sautrāmaṇi* sacrifice prescribed in the *Yajurveda*. It has also been referred to that according to the orthodox view the *Vedas* have emanated from four mouths of Śiva and the *Tantra* is from his fifth mouth. All these evidences conclusively prove that both the *Vedas* and the *Tantras* are interconnected and indivisible in their essential character. Furthermore the *Śrīmadbhā-gavata, Devībhāgavata, Vārāha, Skanda* and the other *Purāṇas* has have unanimously acknowledged the authority of the *Tantra* and have placed it on equal footing with the *Vedas*.

We have referred to the fact that Kullūka Bhaṭṭa, while explaining the first verse of chapter second of the *Manusaṁhitā* has extracted the observation of Hārita to the effect that *Śruti* is of two kinds, namely, *Vaidikī* and *Tāntrikī*. It indubitably proves that the *Tantra* is the inseparable part of the *Veda* and also bears the appellations of *Āgama* and *Nigama*. It has also been stated in the *Mahābhārata* that Mahādeva at the outset revealed the *Veda* and thereafter the *Pāśupata* religion to as ordined in it.[1] It is manifest that this religious ceremony must be *Tantrika* in its character. The *Rāmāyaṇa* has recounted the episode that *Viśvāmitra* taught the two secret and mystic sciences called *balā* and *atibalā* to Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa.[2] And it is a pleasant surprise to find that the process of attainment of these two types of esoteric sciences have been dealt with in the *Tantra*. And it deserves to be deeply emphasized that the *Tāntrika* terminology and ritualism have been expressly mentioned in the *Mahābhārata*. An unbiased consideration of

---

1. *Sṛstisca pralayascaiva devatānāṁ yathārecanam* ।
sādhanañcaiva pūrveṣāṁ purascaraṇameva ca ।।
Ṣaṭkarmasādhanañcaivā dhyānayogascaturvidhah ।
Saptabhirlakṣaṇairyuktamāgamantadvidurbudhāḥ ।।
Vārāhītantra

2. Mābhāṣya, *Śantiparvan*, CCXXCIV, 121-122.

these relevant data marshalled above indubitably prove the great antiquity of the *Tantra*.[1]

There is a difference of opinion as to how many *Tantras* there are. According to the *Mahāsiddhasāratantra*, *Bhāratavarṣa* is divided into three *krāntās* or divisions, viz. *viṣṇu-krāntā, ratha-krāntā, and aśva-krāntā* and each of these *krāntās*, it is said, has sixty-four *Tantras*. The *Śaktimaṅgalatantra* says that the long east of the *Vindhya* Hills extending right up to *Jāva* is *viṣṇu-krāntā*. The country north of the *Vindhya* Hills including *Mahācīna* is *ratha-krāntā*. The rest of the country Westward is *aśva-krāntā*.

Types of *Sādhanās* And *Sādhakas*

The different *Brāhmaṇic* or, *Hindu* forms of worship lead the worshipper to the supreme *Brahman*. The singular distinction of *Brāhmaṇism* is to have recognized that men vary in temperament and in various other ways. The *Tantra* classifies mankind primarily under three heads, viz. The man with a *divya* or divine disposition, the man with a *vīra* or heroic disposition, and the man with a *paśu* or animal disposition. The *Bhāvacūḍāmaṇi Tantra* gives a detailed description of not merely these classes of men, but also of the innumerable subsections under these heads. *Bhāva* (disposition) forms a very important factor in the process of *sādhanā*.

Padmapādācārya, the disciple of Śaṅkarācārya, in his commentary on the *Prapañcasāra*, says that there are five different ways in which the teachings of the *Śāstra* have to be considered. These five ways are: (1) *sthūla* (gross), (2) *sūkṣma* (subtle), (3) *kāraṇa* (causal), (4) *sāmānya* (cosmic), and (5) *sākṣin* (wintness-like). Now every one is not competent to consider things from these *five* different viewpoints. The *paśu* man can hardly be expected to see beyond the *sthūlā* or material aspect of things. In the *vīra* man there is an urge to reach the plane beyond matter, and the true *vīra* is he who is fighting the six enemies—the passions—which obstruct the path of spiritual advancement. The man of *divya* disposition is, as a result of his practice in previous births, is endowed with qualities which make him almost divine. The *Kāmākhyātantra* says that *the man of divya disposition is the beloved of all and is sparing in his words, quiet, steady, sagacious, and attentive to all. He is always contented and is devoted to the feet of his guru (teacher).* He fears no one, is consistent in what he says, and is experienced in all matters. He never swerves from the path of truth and avoids all that is evil. He is good in every way and is Śiva's very self. The *vīra* is a man of fearless disposition, inspires fear in the man of *paśu* disposition, and is pure in his motive. He is gentle in his speech and is always mindful of the five *tattvas* (principles). He is physically strong, courageous, intelligent, and enterprising. He is humble in his ways and is ever ready to cherish the good. The *paśu* is a *man whose inclinations are like those of an animal*. He is a slave to his *six enemies*—lust, anger, greed, pride, illusin, and envy.[1]

---

[1] *Rāmāyaṇa*, Bālakāṇḍa, XXII, 12-15.

---

1. The *Sarvollāsatantra* as also the *Kaulāvalī-nirṇaya* will help inquirers who cannot get the *Bhāvacūḍāmaṇi*.

The Seven *Ācāras* and the *Sapta-bhūmikās*

Closely connected with the three *bhāvas* are the seven *ācāras* or rules of conduct, which are given in the *Kulārṇavatantra* as follows: *veda, vaiṣṇava, śaiva, dakṣiṇa, vāma, siddhānta,* and *kaula.* The aspirant rises step by step through these different *ācāras* till he reaches the seventh and highest stage, when *Brahman* becomes an experiential reality to him. In the first stage, cleanliness of the body and mind is cultivated. The second stage is that of devotion (*bhakti*). The third is that of *jñāna* (knowledge). *Dakṣiṇa,* which is the fourth stage, is that in which the gains acquired in the preceding three stages are consolidated. This is followed by *vāma* which is the stage of renunciation. This does not mẹan, as has been said by the detractors of the *Tantra,* the practice of rites with a woman (*vāmā*). *Vāma* is the reverse of *dakṣiṇa;* it mẹans the path of renunciation. If a woman is at all associated in this practice, she is there to help in the path of renunciation, and not for animal gratification. *A woman as such is an object of great veneration to all schools of Tāntrika sādhakas.* She is considered to be the embodiment on earth of the supreme *Śakti* who pervades the universe. She should therefore be revered as such and, even if guilty of a hundred wrongs, she is not to be hurt even with a flower. It is a sin to speak disparagingly of any woman. The sixth stage, viz. *siddhānta,* is that in which the aspirant comes to the definite conclusion after deliberate consideration as to the relative merits of the path, he reaches the final stage of *kaula.* This is the stage in which *kula* or *Brahman* becomes a reality to him. The first three of these seven stages, viz. *veda, vaiṣṇava, and śaiva belong to paśubhāva; dakṣiṇa* and *vāma* belong to *vīrabhāva;* and the last two belong to *divyabhāva.* According to some, the last alone is *divyabhāva.* And the *Paraśurāmakalpa-sūtra* says that during the first five stages the aspirant must be guided by the teacher, and it is only after he has passed the fifth stage that he is allowed to have freedom of action in every way. The *Viśvasāratantra,* alluding to the importance of the *bhāvas* and *ācāras,* says, *He truly is liberated in this life who knows the seven ācāras,* comprised within the three *bhāvas. It may be noted here that the seven ācāras* correspond, with very slight difference, to the seven *jñāna-bhūmikās* (knowledge-planes) described in the *Yogavāsiṣṭha,* which are: *vividiṣā* or *śubhecchā, vicāraṇā, tanumānasā, sattvāpatti, asaṁsakti, padārthabhāvinī,* and *turīyā.* The difference between the *ācāras* of the *Tantra* and the *jñāna-bhūmikās* of *Yogavāsiṣṭha* is that in the former the aspirant reaches *jñāna* through the path of *bhakti (vaiṣṇava ācāra),* whereas in the latter path of dry rationalism, the stage of *tanumānasā* (*bhakti*) comes to him when, after passing through a number of insurmountable difficulties, he finds that without *bhakti* he can make no further progress.

The Teacher and the Disciple

Like the *Śruti,* the *Tantra* lays great emphasis on the necessity of initiation. *A good teacher is defined as a man of pure birth and pure disposition, who has his senses under control.* He should know the true meaning of the *Āgamas* and other *Śāstras* (scriptures), always doing good to others, and engaged in repetition of God's name, worship, meditation, and offering oblations in the fire. He should have a peaceful mind and must possess the power of granting favours. He should know the *Vedic* teachings, be competent in *yoga*, and be charming like a god. The characteristics of a good disciple are as follows: He should be of good parentage and guileless disposition, and be a seeker of the fourfold aim of human existence.[1] *He should be well read in the Vedas and be intelligent. He should have his animal desires under complete control, always be kind towards all animals, and have faith in the next world.* He should not associate with non-believers (*nāstikas*), but should be assiduous in his duties in general, alert in the discharge of the duties towards his parents in particular, and free from the pride of birth, wealth, and learning in the presence of his teacher. He should always be willing to sacrifice his own interests in the discharge of his duties to the teacher, and be ever ready to serve him in all humility.

The disciple should always bear in mind that his teacher is immortal. This does not mean that the human teacher is so; he is the channel through which the spirit of God descends. The true teacher is the supreme *Brahman* or *Śiva*, or, as some say, the primordial *Śakti*. The position of the human teacher is one of very great responsibility, which does not end with initiation. He has to look after his disciple's welfare in every respect and guide him. He is called the physician of the soul, *and a healthy soul can abide only in a healthy body*. He has to see that even in matters of health the disciple goes the right way. The teacher who is conscious of his responsibility does not initiate in a hurry and the *Śāstra* enjoins that the disciple should not accept a teacher to whom he is not attracted. The mode of initiation is not in every case the same and varies according to the dispostion and the competency of the disciple. The ordinary mode of initiation is called *kriyā-dīkṣā*. This may be an elaborate process consisting of many rituals. Men of higher competency are initiated by other methods. The initiation which is the quickest and most effective is called *vedha-dīkṣā*. A person initiated according to this method realizes at once the oneness of his own self with that of the teacher, the *mantra*, and the deity. He becomes, as the *Tantras* say, the very self of *Śiva*. The disciples who are initiated according to other forms of *dīkṣā* arrive at this realization by slow degrees, each according to his competency.

---

[1] Attainment of moral (*dharma*), economic (*artha*) and aesthetic (*kāma*) perfections, as well as of liberation (*mokṣa*).

Different Modes of Worship

Our scriptures say that it is beyond the average man's intelligence to aprehend the supreme being who is the ultimate reality, *para-tattva*. It is said in the *Tantras* that *Brahman*, who is mere *jñāna*, impartite, and without a body, cannot be worshipped by the average man; so a form is adopted by the aspirant for the purpose of his practice. The *Tantra* again says: *The deity of the vipra (ritualist) is in the fire into which he offers oblations; that of the man of contemplation is in his heart; the man who is not awakened sees him in the image; but the man who knows the Ātman sees him every where.*

It has already been said that there are five aspects in all *Tāntrika* teachings. Here four aspects of worship are given. The fifth aspect of the deity is beyond all description and all worship; for that is the stage where the worshipper and the worshipped beome one. In the *Prapañcasāra* by Śaṅkarācārya and the *Śāradātilaka* by Lakṣmaṇa Deśikendra are given accounts of all the five methods of worship and their sub-divisions.

Initiation or *Dīkṣā*

Initiation or *dīkṣā* means *that which gives a knowledge of things divine and destroys all that leads to a fall*. The teacher, for example, explains how the three letters *a*, *u*, and *m*, constituting the *Praṇava* or *Aum* (Om), represent the three *guṇas*—*sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*; how these are embodied in Viṣṇu, Brahmā, and Śiva; and how these three deities, again, can function only with the help of their respective *Śaktis*. The *guru* also teaches how the Om is but a subtle form of the sacred formula *haṁsaḥ*, also called the *ajapā-mantra*. It is the carrier (*vāhana*) of Brahmā, the Creator, inasmuch as *haṁsaḥ* means the breath of life. *Haṁ* is inspired breath and *saḥ* is that which is expired. Everything movable and immovable breathes, and therefore *Brahmā*, who is nothing but the creative aspect of the supreme substance manifest in the world, is represented as seated thereon. To the ordinary man *haṁsaḥ* is a water-fowl. The aspirant has also to learn that the *praṇava* contains within itself, besides the aforesaid three letters, *bindu*, *nāda* (sound), *śakti* (power), and *śānta* (quiescence).

Creation of the Universe

The universe, some say, has been created by Sadāśiva, others again say that it has been created by Viṣṇu, and so on. There are some who say that the universe has no creator, while others say that it has many. There are some who hold that it, being the product of nature (*svabhāvottha*), is eternally existing; there are others who say that it is the great *Śakti* that created it. There is another class of people who maintain that the *Virāṭapuruṣa* (universal Being) has created it. According to the *Tantra*, *Śiva* or *Brahman* has two aspects, *nirguṇa* (attributeless) and *saguṇa* (with attributes). As the former, He is transcendent and therefore disassociated from *Prakṛti* or *Śakti*; and, as the latter, *He* is associated with *Śakti*. It is out of this that *Śakti* emanates; from that, *nāda* (sound); and out of *nāda*, *bindu*. This conception is put in another way. At the time of *pralaya* or final dissolution everything is withdrawn into the supreme *Śakti*. Thereafter, when *Śakti*, which is the *tattva* (substance) approaches the Light, which is *cit* or knowledge, there arises in the former the desire to create (*vicikīrṣā*), and the *bindu* is formed. This bursts and divides itself, and out of that division there arise *bindu*, *nāda*, and *bīja*. *Bindu* partakes of the nature of Śiva or *jñāna*, *bīja* is *Śakti*, and *nāda* is the relation between the two as the stimulator and the stimulated (*kṣobhya*). When the *bindu* bursts, there arises volume of sound. This sound is called *Śabda Brahman*, which is the *caitanya* pervading all creation, and is the source of the letters of the alphabet, of words, and of other sounds by which thoughts are exchanged. All sounds (*śabda*) have meaning; sound and meaning are inseparable.

Mantra

From *śabda* there arises the ethereal region; from touch, air; from colour, fire; from taste, water; and from smell, earth. It will be seen that the gross comes out of the subtle in the process of unfolding, and when it is reversed the gross disappears in the subtle. In this way, the aspirant begins with a gross material accessory, viz. the image, and rises step by step to that which is beyond word and speech. The image that is used in worship is the form of the *mantra* that is chosen for the worshipper by the *guru*, and represents his conception of *Brahman* (*svakīya Brahmamūrtiḥ*). One's *deva* is the form of *Brahman* evolved out of *one's mantra*. The *Tantra* claims that a man who worships his *Iṣṭadevatā*, which is another name for his image of *Brahman*, in the prescribed manner, lives a happy and contented life, enjoys the objects of his desire, and, at the same time, uplifts himself spiritually. The worship of the *deva* of one's adoption means the worshipper's uplifting himself to the level of that *deva*, and when once this is secured, he arrives at a stage when he becomes competent to apprehend the supreme *deva*, *Brahman*.

The *Tantra* holds that the highest stage is *Kula*. The man becomes a *kaulika* only after he has passed through the six *ācāras* previously mentioned. It is further necessary for him to know the other modes of worship. It has been said that it is only to that man whose mind is purified by the *mantras* of Śiva, Viṣṇu, Durgā, Sūrya, Gaṇeśa, and others that *kula-jñāna* manifests itself.

The Four Stages of Speech

Something ought to be said here about the *four stages of speech*, in three of which sound is inaudiable; it is only at the fourth stage that men give utterance to it. The first of these stages is *parā* located in the *mūlādhāra*, the lowest of the six centres in the spinal cord, commonly called *cakras*. This is but a more stress towards articulation. As this stress takes definite shape, it becomes *paśyantī*, which means *seeing*. The next stage is reached when it arrives at the *anāhatacakra* opposite the heart; it then becomes *madhyamā*, which means *middling*. These are the three names given in the *Tantra* to the three silent stages of vocal sound, and the last stage is *vaikharī*. There are some, the foremost among whom is Padmapādācārya, the chief disciple of Śaṅkarācārya, who held that there are three other stages of sound prior to *parā*. Padmapāda, in commenting on the forty-third verse of the second chapter of the *Prapañcasāra*, says that the stages preceding *parā* are *śūnyā*, *saṁvit*, and *sūkṣmā*. The first is the vibrational stage, the next is that when the sound is about to form, and the third is that when it is forming. An adequate knowledge of sound is of vital importance in the *Tantra*.

The Six *Cakras* and the Six *Adhvans*

This leads us to the six centres, which are: (1) *mūlādhāra*, which is situated above the organ of generation and is the region of earth; (2) *svādhiṣṭhāna*, which is just above the previous one and is the region of water; (3) *maṇipūra*, in the spinal cord opposite the navel, of fire; (4) *anāhata*, opposite the heart, of air; (5) *viśuddha*, opposite the base of the throat, of ether; and (6) *ājñā*, opposite the junction of the eyebrows, of psychic vision. There are other centres beyond the *ājñā*. Opinion is divided as to the number of these *cakras*; some say that there are sixteen, and others that there are more. The piercing (*bheda*) of the six *cakras* is a process whereby the elements of which the body is composed are purified. It is laid down that the attempt to pierce the six *cakras* should be made under the immediate guidance of the teacher, for the least mistake may lead to disastrous results. By this process the six paths (*adhvans*) that lead to a realization of the Supreme are mastered. They are *kalā* (*attribute*), *tattva* (*category*), *bhuvana* (region), *varṇa* (letters), *pada* (words), and *mantra* (mystic symbols or words). The *kalās* are *nivṛtti*, *pratiṣṭhā*, *vidyā*, *śānti*, and *śāntyatītā*. The *tattvas*, according to the *Śaivas*, are thirty-six, and according to the *Vaiṣṇavas*, thirty-two. The *Sāṅkhyas* recognize twenty five *tattvas*. The *tattvas* of *Prakṛti* are ten in number and those of *Tripura* are seven. The *bhuvanas*, according to some, are the *etheral*, the *aerial*, the *igneous*, the *aquatic*, and the *terrne* regions. It will be seen that whichever view is accepted, the different *bhuvanas* are the different stages of the mind of the aspirant. The *varṇas* are the latters of the alphabet with the nasal *bindu* superposed; and the *padas* are the words formed by the combination of letters. The way of *mantras* means the whole mass of *mantras* with their secret. At the time of initiation, the teacher shows how every letter of the alphabet, every word that is spoken, every *mantra* that was discovered by any sage, in fact, everything in existence points towards *Brahman*. By reason of our own limitations we are unable to see *Him*, though *He* is in and around us and is our very being.

Of very great importance are the letters of the *alphabet*. They are called *mātṛkā* (mother). They are collectively the source from which every word and every *mantra* is evolved. Out of the *mantra*, again, is produced its deity. Śaṅkarācārya, in the opening verse of the *Prapañcasāra*, which is an adoration of Śāradā, says, *May śāradā purify your mind*. The body of the goddess is composed of the seven groups (*varga*) into which the (Devanāgarī) *alphabet* is divided. She is eternal and is the cause of the creation and of the dissolution of the universe.

ŚIVA AND ŚAKTI

The *Tantras* say that *Śiva* without *Śakti* is a lifeless corpse, because *wisdom* can not move without *power*. It is at the same time said that the relation between *Śiva*, who is the possessor of *Śakti*, and *Śakti* Herself is one in identity; the one cannot be without the other. The attempt to identify *Śakti* with woman is an error. *Śiva* is commonly said to be the male principle, and *Śakti* the female principle. As a matter of fact, they are neither male nor female, nor are they neuter. The man who worships the wisdom aspect of *Reality*, commonly called the male principle, is a *Śaiva;* and he who worships the power aspect, or the female principle, is called a *Śākta*. *Śiva* as the ruler of the universe rides a bull, i.e. he rules according to *dharma*.[12] When *Śiva* is worshipped his consort is also worshipped; as the two are inseparable. For the same reason, when *Śakti* is worshipped, *Śiva* is also worshipped. To some minds the *Viṣṇu* or pervasive aspect of Reality appeals as the proper way to realize the supreme *Brahman*. The rituals in *Śaiva* and *Vaiṣṇava* worship differ. *Śakti* is worshipped as *Sarasvatī*, the queen of speech. As such, in the enumeration of *Śaktis*, she is given the first place, and is the source from which all *mantras* emanate; she has different aspects with different *mantras*. Other aspects of *Śakti* are *Śrī* or *Lakṣmī*, *Bhuvaneśvarī*, *Durgā*, and *Kālī*.

The Tantras declare that, by following the rules laid down by them, the aspirant, though living the life of a householder, may yet achieve high attainments. Mere the study of *Śāstras* may give us some idea of the *Śabdabrahman*, but it is only by a discriminative knowledge of the essentials (*viveka*) that the supreme *Brahman* can be experienced. The illumination comes to him alone who, through practice in the manner enjoined by his own *Tantra*, has acquired *jñāna*, which teaches him that *Brahmā* the *Creator*, *Viṣṇu* the *Protector*, and even *Śiva* the *Destroyer* are all perishable, and it is the supreme *Truth* alone which endures for all times. The man who has realized that *Truth* has no necessity to know any scriptures, just as a man who has tasted nectar to his heart's content has no necessity for food.[1]

---

[1] *Satya* (truth), *śauca* (purity), *dayā* (kindness), and *dāna* (charity) constitute the four feet of *dharma* conceived as a bull.

CHAPTER-IV

Vedic Base of the *Śākta* Faith

It is a common belief that the *Śāktra* religion, if the name *religion* could be given to the *Śākta* cult, is not a Vedic religion and most of its religious practices are taken from the rites and ceremonies observed by the *non-Aryan*s original inhabitants of India. It is rather strange that this belief is held by eminent Indian scholars of sound learning and high reputation. If, however a careful scrutiny of its doctrines and fundamental principles is made, it can be seen that the roots of the *Sākta* cult are found in the *Vedic Saṃhitās*. The religion of the *Vedas* is something like Polytheism. The supernatural powers of the five elements which caused rain, thunder, drought, earthquakes, floods and the like, naturally struck the *Vedic Aryans* who thought that they were caused by the pleasure and displeasure of the deities governing those natural phenomena. They attributed diseases and other-calamities to the displeasure and anger of the deities, and sought the pleasure and favour of the deities for their material welfare. The prominent deities were *Agni, Indra, Varuṇa* and a few more,each one of whom was looked upon practically as the foremost or the head on different occasions by different clans, and praised as the supreme deity in the particular hymn eulogising the deity.

Similarity of *Śakti* with *Aditi* :

When the philosophisation of these deities began, each one of them was looked upon as possessed of some specific power by means of which that deity granted to the sacrificer what was solicited by him. These powers are referred to in the *Vedic Literature* by words like *Māyā*, *Śakti*, *Śacī* and others for which the common term *Śakti* came to be used later on. The word *Aditi*, meaning beneficial potency in general, was looked upon as a deity and conceived as the mother of gods. The superb *Gāyatrīmantra* of the *Ṛgveda*, which was later looked upon as the soul of the *Veda* along with the symbolic *Om*, was also held as a supremely powerful deity. Similarly, *Sarasvatī*, primarily denoting the sacred river, on whose banks prayers by the recital of *Vedamantras* were offered and sacrifices were performed, and whose favour led to the obtainment of the desired objects, was looked upon as a benevolent deity incarnate and came to be considered as the goddess of learning springing up from the *Creator* himself. These female deities *Gāyatrī*, *Sarasvatī* and others were not considered as spouses of any *Vedic* gods such as *Indra*, *Varuṇa* and others. Sometimes, the words *Indrāṇī*, *Varuṇānī* and others, but they were never independently extolled like *Aditi*, *Sarasvatī*, *Gāyatrī*, *Uṣas*, *Vāk* and others. These independent deities *Aditi*, *Sarasvatī* and others, who occupied a minor position in the *Vedas* as compared to the great gods *Agni*, *Indra*, *Varuṇa* and others, were later on considered as independent goddesses who were none else than the manifestations of the Supreme Power or *Parā-śakti* of the Supreme Soul.

Śākta doctrines in the *Āraṇyaka* period:

In the post-*Vedic* period of the *Āraṇyaka* and the *Upaniṣads* which advocated the propitiation of the deity under consideration, chiefly by means of meditation or *upāsanā* and concentration or *dhyāna*, the power of all pervading soul was emphasized. The realisation of the soul, it was stated, could be had by means of propitiation of the deity by meditation and concentration, accompanied by the utterance of the *mantra*. For example, the word *Gāyatrī* was explained, the deity *Gāyatrī* was looked upon as extolled in the famous stanza *Vak* written in the *Gāyatrī* metre; the deity was taken as representing the Supreme Power of Brahman and the epithets ..... were used in connection with her. The word *Saraswatī* was explained as *full of saraṣ or current of the highest delight*. *Saraswatī* was looked upon as a goddess of the nature of *sat* (the principle of existence), *cit* (the principle of consciousness) and *ānanda* (the principle of delight resulting from the combination of *sat* and *cit*). The expressions cit and others, referring to the thinking, willing and acting powers of the Supreme Soul, were taken as referring to the Supreme Power of the Universal Soul. This Supreme Power, inseparable from the Supreme Soul, no doubt, was taken for the concentration of the mind at the time of the *Upaniṣads*, as shown clearly by the well-known passages of the *Svetāśvataropaniṣad*.

The first period of *Śākta* Philosophy:

The history of the development of the *Śākta* philosophy can be said to be scattered over three periods in three different forms - in the *Vedic* period of prayers and offerings upto 1000 B.C. in a rudimentary form, in the mediaeval period of meditation and concentration from 1000 B.C. to 500 A.D. in a developed form, and in the modern period of worship from 500 A.D. to the present times in a diffused form. In the *Vedic* period its seeds are noticed sown in the *Vāgāmbhṛṇīyasūkta*, *Śrīsūkta* and scattered hymns in the praise of *Uṣas*, *Aditi*, *Sūryā*, *Sarasvatī* and other female deities who are looked upon as creative powers and described to be fulfilling the desires of the sacrificers just like *Indra*, *Agni* and the like. A subtle power, which is referred to by the word *Māyā* is specifically emphasized as possessed by the Vedic deities in them, which is seen personified in the form of female deities. It is quite possible that in those days some original inhabitants of the country were praising and worshipping in a crude way, the *phallus* representing the male and female elements which naturally impressed them as the potent causes of creation. Some scholars notice an actual reference to such a worship in the line .... (*Ṛgveda* V.3.3). These people, at the time of worship, were possibly making an offering of wine, flesh and fish, which formed the usual items of their food and drink, to their favourite deities just as the followers of the *Veda* offered *Soma* juice and the entrails of the beasts on occasions of sacrifices.

The second period of *Śākta* philosophy:

During the second period, up to 500 A.D. the *Śākta* philosophy and cult had their roots made firm among the masses, especially by reason of the *Vedic Literature* being looked upon as the most sacred one which was reserved only for members of the three *castes*. Consequently, those who were not members of the three castes and who, in fact, formed a large majority, had to follow different cults and introduce new forms of meditation and worship. Some great philosophers and thinkers like *Mahāvīra* and *Gautama Buddha* who themselves were members of the higher castes but who did not like the reservation of the *Vedas* for them only, raised practically a standard of revolt against the *Vedic* cult of sacrifices and prayers, and began to preach in the languages spoken by the masses, doctrines similar to those in the *Upanisadṣ* and the *Purāṇas*. In prescribing the course of behaviour, they laid an emphasis on the five vows, known by the term *Yama* and prescribed rules of behaviour strictly in accordance with them. The doctrines preached by these revolutionary thinkers were codified and formulated by their followers in the popular languages *Ardha-māgadhī* and *Pālī* in treatises known by the general name *Āgama*. There were other thinkers and philosophers who, while showing due respect to the *Vedas* and the *Upaniṣads*, preached the worship of deities, saying that what they preached was meant for women as also for those who were not members of the three higher castes. These thinkers, who were anxious to retain the people of ordinary intelligence and power or understanding, in the *Vedic* fold, founded an independent cult. They extolled deities like *Viṣṇu, Devi, Gaṇapati, Sūrya* and *Śiva* by means of passages selected from the *Purāṇas* which were dedicated to these deities. They called their cult quite *Vedic* as they identified the supreme philosophical entity of the *Upanīṣads viz, the Brahman,* with *Śakti,* the Supreme Power, of which the popular deities *Viṣṇu, Devī, Śiva* and others were manifestations. During this period there were some *Upaniṣads* composed such as the *Tripuropaniṣad,* and others which mainly included the doctrines of the *Śākta* cult.

The gist of the Śākta philosophy

The main philosophical doctrines of the *Śākta* system are practically similar to those propounded in the *Śvetāśvatara* and the *Taittirīyopaniṣad* with suitable modifications made by the followers of the system with a view to admiting to their fold other orthodox philosophers like the *Sāṅkhyas* as well as those who followed the *Purāṇa* which were written during those days and had a large number of followers. The doctrines of the *Śākta* system of philosophy can be said to be a sort of concensus of the important tenets of the various orthodox systems of philosophy prevalent in those days. The Brahman of the *Upaniṣads* is said to be of the nature of *sat, cit and ānanda.* The *Śāktas* take *sat* as the highest entity called by the name *parāśakti* (the highest energy) which by its very nature, gets a sort of throbbing which is called *cit* or *Vimarśa* and the result is the exhibition and realization of the nature of the *parāśakti.* The analgoy here is that of the ordinary knowledge of things in the world when the element of consciousness in objects like *ghaṭa,* by virtue of the throbbing of consciousness in them results into the knoweldge of those objects. These *sat, cit* and *ānanda* elements of the Highest Energy correspond in a way to the *sattva, rajas* and *tamas* elements of the *Sāṅkhya* philosophy which constitute the *Mūlaprakṛ*ti according to them.

The chief tenets of the *Śākta* philosophy

The fundamental doctrine of the Highest Energy of the *Śākta* philosophers, sketched above, is clearly based upon the two important lines of *Upaniṣads. The seers, practising the highest concentration, realized the Energy of the Divine Self, which reamins ordinarily always hidden by its own natural properties viz. sattva, rajas and tamas* and *The Highest Energy of this self is stated to be manifold; knowledge, power and action are only its natural constitutents. The concerned Śakti is called Parabindu which, when disturbed, is called Aparabindu of Śabdabrahman from which the Creation proceeds. The knowledge of a thing is not false; only the thing is, in a way, false or prātibhāsika as it is called technically. The realization of the highest principle is achievable by a full practice of the Aṣṭāṅgayoga. Faith enables a person to perform penance or tapas, which results by pursuit of the highest Yoga, into the realization of Śakti. The Upaniṣads and the ancient Sūtra works form the basis of the Sākta philosophy and rituals.*

These doctrines of the *Śāktas*, sketched above, which are based upon a few important passages of the *Taittirīya, Śvetāśvatara* and *Praśna Upaniṣads* form the gist of the *Śākta* cult. Later *Upaniṣads* namely the *Tripurā, Tripurā-tāpinī, Bhāvanā, Devī, Sītā, Saubhāgyalakṣmī* and others, harp upon the principal doctrines of the *Śakta* system and emphasize meditation and concentration. There are some *Sūtra* works, which are printed, the prominent among which are the *Paraśurāmakalpasūtra* and the *Pārānandasūtra*. These *sūtras* are more devoted to the description of rituals than to the mention of philosophical doctrines. They discuss the various forms of *Śakti*, the method of their worship, spiritual guide, initiation and the specific *Vedic* mantras for specific purposes. There are many *sūtra* works which are still in the form of manuscripts. Out of these, the prominent ones are the *Bhāradvājasūtra*, the *Sāṅkhyāyanasūtrā*, the *Vidyāratnasūtra*, the *Nāgānandaśaktisūtra*. The contents of the *Hayagrīva* and *Agastyasūtras* show that they are earlier than the other *sūtras* mentioned above. The *Saptaśatī*, the *Lalitā-sahasranāma*, the *Devīsūkta* and other works, forming a part of epic works, also contribute something to the philosophy of the *Śāktas*, although they are primarily meant for the praise of the specific goddesses.

As religion and philosophy go together in India, the *Śākta philosophy* and its important tenets cannot be properly understood unless the *Śākta* form of worship and the various rituals and practies prescribed in the *Śākta* religion, are taken into consideration. The *Śākta* religion is based on the *Āgama Literature*, as contrasted with the *Vedic* religion which is based on the *Vedic Literature*. The *Āgama* works keep before them *Bhoga* or enjoyment and *Mokṣa* or *Emancipation* as the goals of human existence, while the *Nigama* or *Veda* which consists of the *Karmakāṇḍa* and *Jñānakāṇḍa*, keeps *Dharma* and *Mokṣa* as the two aims. The ritual side of the *Śākta* philosophy consists of the worship of the different forms of the Universal Energy or *Śakti*. This *Śakti* was known by the general name *Devī* who was given different individual names by different worshippers at different places in accordance with the legendary importance which the worshippers had in their minds. The method of worship also, in course of time, differed in the different items of worship and the recitals of the different formulae. The original *Āgama Literature* is described as divided into three groups named *Tantra, Yāmala* and *Ḍāmara* and each group is said to be consisting of 64 works. The sixty four *Tantra* works are mentioned by later *Śākta* scholars like *Lakṣmīdhara, Bhāskararāya* and others. Many large and small works were written as based upon these works whose total number in the course of a few centuries increased vary considerably. Many of these have been preserved very carefully in the different *Śākta* schools and families.

The Vedic deities *Uṣas, Sūryā* and *Aditi* as aspects of *Śakti*

It can be supposed that the original *phallu's* worship, prevailing among the original inhabitants of India and the invaders from the South, has contributed much to the worship of the power goddess or *Śaktidevī*. There is a clear reference to the *phallus* worship in the words of the hymn (*Ṛgveda* V.3.3). On the lines of the *Vedic* sacrifices, offerings were given to the goddess and suitable hymns in her praise were chanted. The Goddess *Śakti* was primarily conceived in three aspects, and three forms were given to her, characterised respectively by *Kaumārya* or maidenhood, *Patnībhāva* or wifehood and *mātṛbhāva* or motherhood. In her maidenhood the goddess was supposed to be the emanation of the *Vedic* deity *Uṣas* who was eulogized in a number of *Vedic* hymns. The hymns in praise of *Sūrya* describe and eulogize the wifehood of the Goddess, while the description of *Aditi* excellently suits the motherhood of the Goddess of Energy, where *Aditi* is extolled as the mother of gods. In course of time, the number of names and epithets increased to several hundreds as testified to by the *Ṛgveda* in which, as many as one thousand epithets are mentioned. The *Śākta* worship spread in countries beyond the boundaries of India, and the *non-Vedic* forms of religion like Buddhism and Jainism also gave a distinguished place to the *Universal Goddess* under name like *Tārā*, *Padmāvatī* and others in their courses of worship. It is believed that idol-worship had its origin in the early centuries and this *Universal Goddess* was conceived in numerous forms distinguished by different weapons, missiles, vehicles and ornaments. The Goddess was believed to have been stationed in different mystic figures and charts in which she was made an object of meditation and mental concentration.

Although the propounders of the *Sākta* philosophy advocated that their doctrines were based on the *Upaniṣads* and had their root in them, their cult was absolutely *non-Sactarian* and members of any caste and sect could become the worshippers of *Śakti*. The cult of the original inhabitants, who followed the *phallus* worship, was incorporated by the *Śākta* worshippers in their own cult. The worshippers of *Sūrya*, *Viṣṇu*, *Gaṇapati*, *Devī* and other deities that were extolled in the epics, were also taken into their own fold by the *Śākta* philosophers. This could be easily brought about as the worshippers of all these deities could be easily prevailed upon to worship the supreme Goddess of Power, whose emanations only were the different gods and without whose help the gods could not favour the worshippers. As a result, various forms of worship differing in minor details of rituals and ceremonies became current in the comprehensive *Śākta* cult. Another powerful inductment to the general majority of people for entering the fold of the *Śākta* worshippers was a permission to them to take their usual food and drink consisting of wine, flesh and fish, which were to be offered to the goddess on the special occasions of her worship.

The *Tantra* Treatises

Numerous treaties exceeding some hundreds were written in the third period of the development of the *Śākta* cult from 500 A.D. to the present times, which were all based on the authoritative philosophical and religious works of the *Śākta* system in the second period from 500 B. C. to 500 A.D. The word *tantra* came to be used for such works. The genesis of the use of the word *tantra* in the sense of mystic rites is difficult to find out. The word in the early centuries came to mean a scientific treatise, and as applicable to the well-known *Kātantra* and *Ṛktantra* works, was explained as a *work expounding the analysis of words as stated in the line*. The word, derived from Tan- to stretch, has a current sense in two or more things with one effort. This sense was only a development of the literal sense *viz. extension of effort towards the* *accomplishment of other things*. The word *tantra* was specifically applied to the literature dealing with the mystic rites and ceremonies of the worshippers of *Śakti*, as thereby the worshippers with a single effort accomplished two human ends *viz. Bhoga and Mokṣa*. In the *Tantra Literature*, the worshipper was given the general name *sādhaka*. There were three kinds of rituals, named *Vāma, Miśra* and *Dakṣiṇa*. A large majority of the *Śākta* worshippers who did not want to exert strict control on the senses and mind, and in fact, who could not exert it, followed the *Vāma-mārga* which was also known by the name *kaulamārga* and which gave a kind of liberty in drinking, eating and the like. The worshippers did not observe even the first two kinds of *Yoga* viz. the five kinds of *Yama* and the five kinds of *Niyama* although their observance was in a way essential for their spiritual progress. Such of the *Sādhakas* who could exert due control over their minds and senses and wished to obtain higher *Siddhis*, strictly observed the five kinds of *Yamas* and *Niyamas* and practised the four higher stages of *Yoga viz. āsana, prāṇāyāma, pratyāhāra* and *dhāraṇā*. By virtue of their self-restraint, they obtained a kind of spiritual strength and energy which many of the worshippers were tempted on increasing their material prosperity and obtaining material gains. Such of the worshippers as could exert a complete control over their minds by following the six out of the eight kinds of *Yoga*, and did not spend their spiritual energy on material gains, rose higher and higher and by virtue of their meditation and mental concentration or *Samādhi* got the highest *Siddhi* or emancipation or co-existence with the deity.

The two paths of the *Śākta* worshippers

Although there were many spiritually exalted preceptors to guide the worshipper, and excellent treatises like the *Śrīsūkta* and the *Vāksūkta*, the *Sūtras* of *Hayagrīva* and *Agastya*, *stotras* like the *Subhagodaya*, *Saundaryalaharī*, *Lalitātriśatī*, and learned volumes like *Bhāṣyas* on the *Saundaryalaharī* and *Lalitāsahasranāma* and other scholarly works like the *Varivasyārahasya*, *Nityotsava* etc. were available, however till the worshippers following the right path, remain in a minority. The common people were guided or rather misguided by their *wordly* preceptors who with the worshippers were after wordly pleasures. The form of worship which many times became degraded, made the worshippers contemptible among people as much so, that the word *śākta* turned something into an abuse. An advantage of the growing disrepute of the *Śākta* worshippers was naturaly taken by the staunch *Vedic* scholars who began to condemn the *Śākta* cult as a *non-Vedic* cult. As a result, the number of genuine *Śākta* worshippers was considerably reduced and those that followed the cult had to offer worship silently and privately to avoid poignant criticism. The religious rites and ceremonies were given a sort of complete secrecy expressed by the words. This down fall of the *Śākta* cult began in the eighth and the ninth centuries and has continued since then upto the present time.

The third period of *Śākta* philosophy

During the third period of the history and development of the *Śākta* cult and philosophy which extends over a long period of time from the sixth century upto the present time, qualitatively little progress appears to have been made although quantitavely the progress might be exceeding that in the second period. The number of treatises, written by scholars and learned followers of the *Śākta* cult specifying the form and nature of the goddess, the detailed methods of worship and the practices, rules and regulations regarding worship, there are scholarly contributions by only a few scholars. It is a general belief that staunch scholars of *Advaitavedānta* philosophy and Grammar were many times the worshippers of *Śakti* in their private life, being given to the worship of the Goddess or Devī, irrespective of her name. Gauḍapādācārya and his pupil's pupil, the great *Śaṅkarācārya*, were believed to have been the worshippers of Śaktidevī, as testified to by their well-known works *Subhagodaya* and *Saundaryalaharī* respectively. It is very likely that Mādhavācārya, the learned author of the *Sarvadarśanasaṃgraha*, was also a follower of the *Śākta* cult. The philosophical tenets of which he has given no separate treatment in his *Sarvadarśanasaṅgraha* as he possibly thought that inherently the doctrines of the *Śāktas* did not differ from those of the *Advaitavedāntins*. Appaya Dīkṣita, a staunch *Advaitin*, was very likely *Śākta* worshipper as it can be proved by his work *Śivatattvaviveka*. It is also believed that the great grammarians Nāgeśabhaṭṭa and Bhairavamiśra were worshippers of *Śakti*. Bhāskararāya, a devoted *Śākta*, wrote several works on the *Śākta* cult, out of which the *Varivasyārahasya*, *Saubhāgyabhāskara*, *Guptavatī* (a commentary on the *Saptaśatī*) and *Setubandha* (a commentary on the *Yoginīhrdayatantra*) deserve a special mention. Umānandanātha, a scholar in the line of Bhāskararāya's pupils has written a scholarly treatise *Nityotsava* which is well known to the followers of the *Śākta* cult.

Identity of the Parā Śakti and the Parabrahman

The *Śākta* philosophers have stated that *Śakti* or the Supreme Energy is the highest reality; at the same time, they have admitted the Monism of the *Upaniṣads* advocating the Unity of the Supreme soul, expressed also by the words *Brahman* or *Sat*. A doubt naturally arises as to how the *Supreme Soul* as an object, can be identical with the *Supreme Energy*, which could be more or less its property. The difficulty is removed by having recourse to the maxim of the identity of an object and its property, which is known by the name. Although the thing and its property may have the same residence, still according to logicians they are different things, one being called *Guṇin* or *dravya* and the other being called *Guṇa*. To remove this objection, the author has given two separate *sūtras* and meaning *not separate* and not *non-different* raspectively. According to its *Śākta* philosophers, *Śakti* has *sat* as its substratum and *cit* are its property, which latter may or may not be manifested; but, when manifest, the *Śakti* assumes the form of the soul which has the nature of ecstasy (*ānanda*). In short, *Śakti* is the same as *sat cit* and *ānanda*.

Enlivened and unenlivened *Śakti*

The supreme *Śakti* is said to have two aspects or conditions termed *nirābhūsā* when the light i.e.

the consciousness in it is latent, and *Sābhāsā* when it is manifest. Out of the two conditions *Sābhāsā* and *Nirābhāsā*, the *Nirabhāsā* condition exactly corresponds to the *Nirguṇanirākāraparabrahman* of the *Vadāntins* with this difference that the *Parabrahman* of the *Vedāntins* is *possessed of the nature of consciusness .... While*, the *Parāśakti* of the *Śāktas* is *possessed of the nature of Power*. Both consciousness and insensateness form the nature of *Parāśakti*, but they are both unmanifested or latent. The *Sābhāsāśakti* with manifested consciousness, is called by the name *Bhuvanasundarī*, *Mahāmāyā*, *Īśaśkti* and the like. There is no detailed explanation of the word *Sābhāsā* given by the author. The vast subject matter is put forth in clear and full details in such a manner that although the work consists of eighteen chapters containing aphorisms, the author could deal with his subject matter, only by means of conclusive statements after statements, in the form of aphorisms without going into details by offering explanations and by raising objections and answering them. It appears, however, that the word *ābhāsa* has been used in the same sense in which Gauḍapādācārya and his predecessors have used it. The sense of *ābhāsa* meaning show or manifestation can be clearly understood by the instance of *vyādharājaputra* (prince known as hunter) where the false appearance, for instance as a hunter, has got no external object forming a condition or *upādhi*. It is the ignorance alone of the Reality on the part of the hunter himself and others that causes the false appearance or misunderstanding. The phenomenon of the world is explained as caused by the inherent ignorance of the individual self about his own reality, as can be seen from the famous line of Gauḍapādācārya.

The limitatoin of *Parā-Śakti* :

Just as the prince, living in the residence of hunters in their dress and behaving like them, has not his real nature as a prince known to himself and others, similarly, the *Supreme Power* which inherently has no consciousness manifest in it, always appears as *sābhāsā* as long as its original nature is covered by consciusness or *cit*. The nature of this *sābhāsaśakti* known by the names *Bhuvanasundarī* and others, is the same as *Īśvara* of the *Vedāntins*. Sureśwarācārya, the author of the *Bṛhadāraṇyakabhāṣyavartika* has given the analogy of a red flower which, by its vicinity, makes the white crystal appear red, to explain the nature of the Īśvara or the *Almighty* who is, in fact, none else than the Supreme Soul appearing as the Almighty possessed of various powers, by virtue of the vicinity of Nescience or *Avidyā*. The analogy is named *ābhāsavāda*. To explain the same i.e. *avidyā*, Vācaspatimiśra, the author of the *Bhāmatī* has given the analogy of the jug and other things which limit the extent of the unlimited expanse of the *sky* or *ether*. The view is named *Avacchedavāda*. Prakāśātmamuni the author of the *Saṅkṣepaśārīraka*, has given the analogy of mirror, water and the like, which reflect inside them the substance whose rays fall upon them. The analogy is technically called *pratibimbavāda*. To explain the appearance of the *Supreme Power* as *Bhuvaneśvarī*, our author appears to have taken the analogy called *ābhāsavāda* as appears from the word *ābhāsa*; the analogy, of course is as given by the old *Vedāntins* like Gauḍapāda and others.

Creation of the world

The *Bhuvanasundarī* is none else than the *Sābhāsāśakti* i.e. the Supreme Power with cit or consciousness present in it. This consciousness inside the Supreme Power is known as *Gaṇeśa*. The Supreme power has also (as its place of residence) the *Prakṛti* or the *Primaeval* Matter which is unmanifest as its three constitutents *sattva, rajas* and *tamas* are in equilibrium. The Bhuvanasundarī is able to assume any form she desires and hence, she is also called *Kāraṇasthāna*. The Primaeval Matter is also named *Maṇidvīpa* as also *Cintāmaṇidvipa,* which forms the goal of one who has known and realised the Supreme Power. The power of consciousness of the Bhuvanasundarī is the soul, and her desire is the time or *kāla*. This *kāla* which is the outcome of *śakti,* becomes the cause of Creation. As *kāla* or Time is defined as the combination of Illusion (*māyā*) and consciousness (*cit*), the expression *time creates the world* means that the world is a development of the *Primaeval Matter* and *Consciousness* combined together.

The three forms and the four stages of *Bhuvanasundarī*

This Bhuvanasundarī manifiests herself in her spiritual, divine and material forms in the *Turīya, Prājña, Taijasa* and *Viśva* stages. In her manifestation in the fourth or the highest stage, the *Turīya Atman* as described in the *Upaniṣads,* is her spiritual form, the Bhuvanasundarī herself is her divine form, in which form when faultlessly and fully propitiated by devotion and meditation, she conveys the devotee to the *Maṇidvīpa* itself which is the material form of Bhuvanasundarī. By means of meditation with a fully concentrated mind on the congregate sound of the syllable *Om* and the *nasal letter of the word (hrīm),* this Bhuvanasundarī is realized. The *Mūlādhāracakra* in the body is her place of residence. In her manifestation in the third stage called *Prājña,* the individual soul, limited by *Nescience* or *Ignorance,* is her spiritual form. As the *Tāmasī Māyā* is present as witness to the activities of the individual soul, the individual person is not in a position to have the knowledge of the real nature of Bhuvanasundarī. *Rudra,* possessed of the *tamas* constitutent of *prakṛti* in a large percentage, is the divine form of Bhuvanasundarī, while the material form is the whole Universe with the five great elements mixed in their stated proportion. By the knowledge and realization of *Śakti* in this stage, obtained by meditation with a concentrated mind on the letter *Hrīm* or *Klīm* and aim of a devotee can reach *Brahmaloka* which is made up of eight constituents of *Prakṛti* and which is called by the name *kāryaloka* also. The place of residence of the Supreme Energy in this stage is the *Viśuddhicakra* inside the neck. In her manifestation in the second stage called *Taịjasa.* The *Taijasa* soul is her spiritual form. Mahālakṣmī is her divine form, while matter in all its transformations is her material form. By the worship of Viṣṇu, the underlying Spirit of this stage, a man can obtain the vicinity of Viṣṇu in the region of Viṣṇu. In her manifestation in the first or primary stage called by the name *Viśva,* the *Viśva* soul his her spiritual form, Mahāsarasvatī is her divine form and this manifold Universe which has been constituted of the five gross elements and which is termed *Virāṭ*, is her material form. By the right performance of the several rituals, and doing one's duties without entertaining any desire of their fruit, one can obtain the knowledge of *Śakti* manifested in this primary or first stage and reach the world of *Brahman* which forms one's goal.

The *Śākta* conception of *Mukti*

According to the *Śākta* system of philosophy, liberation is the obtainment of that world which is made up of matter constituted purely of *Sattva*, and which is also known by the terms *Maṇidvīpa* as also by *Cintāmaṇidvīpa*. This liberation results from the knowledge of the *Reality* which means the full realization of the *Sense* of the sentences *tattvamasi, ahaṃ brahmāsmi* and others, which can be had by meditation on Bhuvanasundarī with full concentration of the mind. The *liberation*, in fact, is a sort of dissolution of the mind into the form of Bhuvanasundarī which is *Sābhāsā*. This *liberation* leads, no doubt, to the permanent freedom from the cycle of existences, which is nothing else than misery; Absolution which results from *Samādhi* alone, when the mind is completely dissolved into the *Nirābhāsāśakti* or the Absolute Power. The author of the *Sūtras* has clearly stated this in the aphorism *mūlāvidyānāśadvārā brahmaprāptir muktiḥ*. This absolution, advocated by the *Śākta* philosophers differs only slightly from the Absolution advocated by the *Upaniṣads*. The difference is subtle, but important. In the *Nirābhāsā mukti* of the

Śāktas, the consciousness is not manifest, while in the *Mukti* advocated by the *Upaniṣads*, the soul is of the very nature of consciousness which, of course, is manifest. In the *Nirabhāsamukti*, the nature of the *Śakti* is neither sentient nor insensate. Such a description of *Mukti* is tantamount to the notion of the *Nihilistic Buddhists* termed *Nirvāṇa* which says that *Mukti* is of the nature of *Sūnya* or void. Perhaps it may be supposed to have the nature of complete fullness which is similar to what is described in the famous *Śāntimantra*:—पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात्पूर्णमुदच्यते । पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ॥

The four steps to *Mukti*

There are four steps to be ascended by the ladder for Absolution. The time required for ascending the ladder is short or long according to the spiritual strength of the person who ascends, as he could sometimes jump over one step or even two. The four steps are *Karmayoga*, *Bhaktiyoga*, *Mantrayoga* (termed *upāsanāyoga* also) and *Jñānayoga*. The first step is *Brahmaloka* which can be achieved by the removal of the effects of *karman*. Out of the three kinds *karman*, viz. *Sañcita* (.... or past), *Prārabdha* (or present) and *Agāmin* (...... or future), the *Prārabdhakarman* is destroyed by actually enjoying the fruit of the *Karman* or by atonement. The obligatory *Karman* and the occasional *karmas* have to be done, but, in case they are performed without the least desire for fruit, no new *Karman* nor any seed of *Karman* is produced and thereby there arises no question of *Āgāmikarman*. There remains now the *Sañcitakarman* or past deeds which can only be destroyed by the knowledge of the *reality* as is well stated in the line of *Bhagavadgītā*. To achieve this knowledge, the second and the third steps have to be ascended. The worshipper devoted to the performance of his obligatory, voluntary and other non-forbidden activities without paying any attention to the fruit, is able to ascent the first step only, when he loses attachment to his gross body. His attachment, to his subtle body remains intact to abandon which, he has to observe all the bodily and mental restraints and propitiate the deity by warm devotion with full concentration of the mind. This enables a person to ascend the second step, as a result of which he becomes apathetic to the gross as well as the subtle Universe and has attachment only to the primaeval matter and its seven developments viz. *mahat* (*Buddhi*), *ahaṅkāra* (egoism) and the five rudimentary elements. After ascending the second step, the devotee, by constant meditation and full concentration on the goddess Bhuvanasundarī, ascends the third step. He can be said to have obtained the nature or form of Bhuvanasundarī, which is nothing else but *Supreme Energy* with consciousness. He then by *Samādhi* dissolves his mind into the *Supreme Power* and becomes one therewith.

● ● ●

CHAPTER-V

Philosophical Basis of *Tāntric Śaktism*

Śaktism is a form of dynamic *Hinduism*. It is *Hinduism* in its mood of synthesis and reconciliation. From the *Purāṇic* point of view, Devī, is the sister of Viṣṇu (*Hari-sahodarī*) and the wife of Śiva (Kapāli-prāṇanāyikā) and the mother of Gaṇeśa and Subrahmaṇya. Thus she is the centre of the supreme group of deities. From the *Darśana* point of view, the *avikārapariṇāmavāda*[1] of *Śaktism* is bound to reconcile the interminable and resounding conflicts of *ārambhavāda* (Creation), *pariṇāma vāda* (Evoluation) and *vivartavāda* (Apparent Evolution). From the cosmogonic point of view, *Śaktism amplifies* and supplements *Sāṅkhya* doctrine[2] and relates the godless universe of Kapila to God once more. From the point of view of religious *sādhanā*, the Devī, who is the giver of the intuitive knowledge of God (*Śivajñānapradāyinī*) is herself the supreme *Śākti* as shown in the *Kenopaniṣad*.[1]

---

[1] For a fuller explanation of this principle see Śrīvarivasyārahasyam verse (3) and the floss on this of Brahmaśrī N. Subrahmanya Aiyar in Tamil (Brahmavidyāvimarśini Sabhā publication series 3). The first part of the verse relates to the *vivartavāda*, and the succeeding part to *avikārapariṇāmavāda*. The essence of the doctrine is that though the world is a product of *Brahman*, *Brahman* itself does not suffer change like that of milk and curd or clay and pot etc.

[2] According to the *Sāṅkhya* philosophy, (a) the *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti* are different. In the *Śākta* system *Śakti* and *Śākta*

The special excellence of *Śaktism* lies in its emphasis on *sādhanā*. There can be no *siddhi* without *sādhanā*. To know a thing in its fulness we must become it. To know *Brahman* we have to be *Brahman*. i.e. realisation of *Brahman*. The excellence of *Śaktism* lies in its affirmation of *Śakti* as consciousness and of the identity of *Śakti* with *Brahman*. In short Brahman is static *Śakti* and *Śakti* is dynamic Brahman. The *Tantra* literature gives us *mantras*, rituals and yogic *sādhanās* which supplement the *Vedic sādhanās*, produce the highest results quickly and with ease, and above all they are open to all castes and both sexes. The great glory of *Śaktism* is its affirmation that each of us has an inherent power i.e. *Śakti*. Such power is the power of joy, the power of love, power of service and the power of renunciation. In common with all schools of *Hinduism*, *Śaktism* also inculcates a healthy physical and moral life. Ney there be no hesitation about affirming this basic fact. The *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*[2] clearly proclaims that he, who has not

---

form one whole. (b) The *Sāṅkhyas* are content with *Jaḍaśakti* but *Śāktas* believe in *Citśakti* also. (c) The *Śākta Tattvas* are fuller than the *Sāṅkhya* ones (36 as against 24; *Ṣaḍviṁsa tattvāni visvām*). See also *Śrīvidyāsaparyā* ed. by N. Subrahmany Aiyar (Brahmavidyā Vimarśani Sabhā Series- 5) p.27.

[1] *Kenop.*, IV, 7 and 8.

[2] *Kaṭhopaniṣad*, *Dvitīyavallī*, 24.

refrained from evil acts and who has no peace of mind and self-control, cannot attain God by any means.

There is much misunderstanding about *Vāma mārga of Śaktism* even today. The *Vāmamārga* with its reference to the five *makāras* is applicable only to such communities as have not refrained from flesh and wine. The *Agastyasūtras*[1] make this clear beyond doubt. The five *makāras* are *madya* (wine) *matsya* (fish), *māṁsa* (flesh), *maithuna* (sexual union) and *mudrā* (mystic gesture). It is unfortunate that some *sādhakas* resorted to the *Vāmamārga* for indulging in forbidden foods and drinks and forbidden sex contacts. In fact *Vāmamārga is an extremist application of the doctrines and practices of Śaktism*. The worship of the naked woman-was but to *divinise our view of sex* and to take away sex-mindedness. But very often in this imperfect world the way to hell is paved with good intentions. Further the esoteric aspect of the five *makāras* has been generally forgotten by the people. Wine (*madya*) is the nectar flowing from the *Ciccandra-maṇḍala* in Yoga, *Māṁsa* (flesh-eating) is the control of the appetite by feeding on oneself by fasting. The *matsya* (fish) and *mudrā* are the *Idā* and *Pingalā nādis*. *Maithuna is the joy of the union of the soul and the Brahman*.

Of cource we do find many sects of *Śaktism* just as we find many sects of *Vedāntism*. Even so there would be and there are some divergence of doctrines between *Śaktism* and *Vedantism*. The *Śaiva-Śākta* doctrines are specific interpretations of the *Vedanta* and differ in several respects from that of Śaṅkara, though as they agree with him on the fundamental question of the unity of *Jīvātmā* and *Paramātmā*, they are therefore *Advaitins*. *Āgama* then is one interpretation of *Vedānta;* an interpretation doubtlessly influenced by the practical ends which the *Śastṛa* has in view.[1] *It is concluded that the Śāktatantra is the Sādhanaśāstra of Advaita.*

---

[1] Ch. IV. 66-68 : from a Mss. copy in prosession of Dewan Bahadur K.S. Ramaswami Sastri. The total number of *sūtras* is 300.

Let us therefore clearly remember the unity of the *Vedas* and the *Āgamas* and assert the Śaktism is one aspect of *Vedāntism*. It can be claimed that *Śaktism* is thoroughly *Vedic* and has the point of reconciliation of all the sects and schools of *Hinduism*. Kullūka Bhaṭṭa says in his commentary on Manu[2] the *Śruti* is of two kinds, viz, *Vaidikī* and *Tantrikī*. The great Śrikaṇtha in his commentery on the *Vedānta-sūtras* states in an explanatory[3] term that he sees no difference between the *Vedas* and the *Āgamas* and that all these are really one. Śaṅkara says in his *Bhāṣya*[4] on *Triśatī* that Devī is the *Brahmavidyā* in the form of the *Mahāvākyas* (*Tattvamasī*, etc.). The *Kulārṇavatantra* says that *Kauladharma* is based on the *Vedas*,[5] and the *Ṣaṭdarśanas* are limbs of the *Kaula* doctrine.[6] The

---

[1] *Śakti and Śākta*, p.27.

[2] *Manusmṛti* II/1.

[3] *Śrutisca dvividhā vaidikī tāntrikī ca* I Manu ch. II.ii.8.

[4] *Collected works* of Śaṅkara, Vani Vilas ed. Vol. XVIII, pp.285-86.

[5] *Kulārṇava-tantra*.

[6] *Śākti and Śākta*, p.45

Prapancasāra of Śaṅkar refers to the *Vaidika Mahāvākyās.*[1] The *Niruttaratantra* calls the *Tantra* as the fifth *Veda.*[2] The *Mahārudrayāmala* goes so far as to say that he, who is devoid of *Vaidikācāra* is disqualified for *Śaktism.*[3] In the *Mahānirvāṇatantra* the mantra *Om Saccidānandabrahma,* is revealed.[4]

In the light of these texts we need not doubt that *Śaktism* is thoroughly Vedic in its character. It affirms that the *Tantras* are the special *Veda* for the *Kali Yuga*. It accepts the *Advaita* doctrine and affirms the fundamental unity of the *Jīvātmā* (individual soul) and *Paramātmā* (*Śiva-Śakti*). It further affirms the doctrines of *Karma* and of transmigration. It accepts the *Saṁskārās* and *Acārās* and the different *yogas*. It still further affirms *Mokṣa* as the supreme goal of life.

God is above name and form and hence above sex as well. But in the *Saguṇa* aspect, God can be realised either as *Father* or as *Mother*. God is spoken of as *Śiva-Śakti* (Consciousness and its Power). The *Saundaryalaharī* of *Śri Śaṅkara* says in its opening verse[5] that *Śiva* when united with *Śakti* permeates and sustains the *Universe* but cannot have an iota of activity when seperated from *Śakti.*

This is the basic and fundamental tenet in *Śaktism.* The *Śiva-Śakti* in its dynamism becomes *Māyā Śakti and* makes the *Nirguṇa* aspect of God shine forth as the *Saguṇa aspect*. It becomes also

---

1. *Ibid.*
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Mahānirvāṇatantra.* II.vv. 34.36. *Tāntric* Texts, vol.XIII.
5. *Saundaryalaharī*

Prakṛtitattva which is composed of the three *Guṇas* (*Sattva, Rajas,* and *Tamas*) and whose function is to finalize the infinite consciousness, and manifest the latter as the universe of Matter and the universe of *Jīvas* endowed with life and mind-which are *Aparā Prakṛti* and *Parā Prakṛti,* to use the language of the *Bhagavadgītā.*[1]

It is here that we find another aspect of the reconciliation of all other aspects of *Hinduism* in *Śaktism*. The *Advaita* stresses unity, the *Viśiṣṭādvaita* stresses *triplicity in unity* and the *Dvaita* stresses *multiplicity*. The *Advaita's* stress on unity leads to call the world *Mithyā*. No doubt, *Mityā* does not mean unreality or illusion or non-existence. It means only relative and phenomenal existence. But all the same the lack of the link of *Śakti* between *Brahman* and the *Universe* has led to the charge of the unreality of universe as being the *Advaita* doctrine. *Nay,* it has led also to some schools of *Advaita* negating the reality of the universe altogether, though Śri Śaṅkara definitely declares that the universe has a relative or phenomenal reality (*vyāvahārikasattā*).[2] The schools laying stress on triplicity and multiplicity have gone far away from the supreme doctrine of unity which was the greatest title of Indian thoughts to claim world homage, because the doctrine of devotion is shared by *Hinduism* with other religions; but the doctrine of *soham* (which in *Śaktism* becomes *sāham*)[3] has no counterpart outside India.

---

[1] *Gītā* ch. VII. 4-5.

[2] *Śāṅkarabhāṣya on Brahmasūtra,* II, 1.14.

[3] *Mahānirvāṇa,* VIII. 264-65. See also *The Garlan of Letters*

The difference between the *Śākta* attitude towards the universe and the prevalent pessimistic *Hindu* attitude is striking. Quite naturally two strains run through human thought, the optimistic strain based on the sense of eternity and joy and the pessimistic strain based on the sense of evanescence, pain and grief. There are passages[1] saying that the world is born in joy and lives in joy and becomes an involute in joy. There are other passages[2] which emphasise that it is impermanent (*anitya*) and joyless (*asukha*). Further, one view is that the universe is gross and lifeless matter. Another view subtlises the universe. Yet another view explains away the universe as a *mere appearance* or a mere *illusion*. According to the *Śākta* doctrine we must take our stand on a more fundamental truth, though the above said aspects are by no means false but are relatively true. *Śakti* is *Cidrūpiṇī* and *Ānandarūpiṇī* (pure blissful consciousness). Nature, i.e., the material universe, is but her play (*līlā*) and her manifestation. From this idea follows the idea of the real and joyful character of the universe, which we can enjoy but are unable to enjoy because of the desire-element in our mind which weaves for us the net of pain and grief. A desireless and devoted state of mind will enable us to enjoy *Her līlās* in a calm and happy spirit. In the *Rudrayāmalatantra,* Devī says : *My worship (dhyāna) is without austerity and pain.*

(1952), p.107.

[1] *Taitti. Up.* III.6.

[2] *Gītā,* VIII. 15.

Thus the emphasis of *Śaktism* on *Citśakti* and *Māyāśakti and Prakṛtiśakti* is a very important aspect of its synthetic emphasis. *Citśakti* is beyond both the macrocosm and the microcosm. It is the origin of the series of evolutes which culminates in the experienced universe and the experiencing ego with its five sheaths and three states. It is infinite eternal consciousness, love and bliss. It corresponds to the *Saguṇa Brahman* of *Vedanta* while *Śiva* corresponds to *Nirguṇa Brahman*. It is the fundamental substratum that, however veiled, is the cause of response in the mineral realm, and of sentience in the vegetable realm, and of thought and feeling in the animal and human realms. It was the special glory of Indian thought and especially of the *Śākta* philosophy, to realise and reveal the existence and fundamental cognateness of the response to stimuli and atomic memory, which we find in the inorganic plane and the minor sentiency, and psychic response in the vegetable kingdom and the ascending aesthesia or capacity of feeling in the animal kingdom and especially in the human kingdom.

According to *Śākta* philosophy, *Māyāśakti* is only *Śiva* in the aspect, which *He* assumes as the material cause (*upādānakāraṇa*) of the universe. Sir John Woodroffe explains well the two complimentary points of view, from which the universe is looked at by *Advaitavedānta* and *Śāktavedānta*. *Śankara says that there is, in truth, no creation* and *therfore there can be no question how it arose*. This is because he views the problem from the transcendental (*Pāramārṭhika*) standpoint of *siddhi*. The *Tantraśāstra*, on the other hand, being a practical *sādhanāśāstra* views the matter from the *jīva* standpoint. To us the universe and ourselves are real and *Iśvara*, the *Creator*, also is real. Therefore, there is a *Creation*, and Śiva as *Śakti* creates by evolving into the universe and then appearing as all *jīvas*. This is the old *Upaniṣadic* doctrine of *the spider actually evolving the web from itself, the web being its substance in that form*. According to the *Śākta* doctrine, *Māyāśakti* is an evolute of *Citśakti*, and *Citśakti* is involved into *Cit* or *Brahman*.[1]

Taking the grossest forms of the manifestation of *Śakti*, the doctrine of *Śaktism* clearly affirms that the *tamo-guṇa* pre-ponderates in the mineral world, while *tamas* lessens in the vegetable world and is added to by *rajas* and *sattva*. In the animal world, *rajas* and *sattva* increase while in the human kingdom the ascent is in the direction of more and more *sattvaguna*, the highest state being the sublimation and self-transcendence of *sattvaguṇa* in *mokṣa*. From it follows that it is the privilege and duty of Man to let the soul's *Saccidānanda* nature shine forth more and more. Hence the ethical life is a life of increasing love and happiness through increasing love and service as well as renunciation.

In describing the evolution of the *Śakti*, we must not fail to remember that the *Śākta* philosophy emplifies the *Sāṅkhya theory* of categories in a way that reconciles *Sāṅkhya* and *Vedānta*. The *Sāṅkhya* system does not affirm God and it thinks that the universe is the resultant of the proximity of an insentient *Prakṛti*, which is composed of the three *Guṇas* (*sattva, rajas, and tamas*). It says that *Prakṛti* moves from its state of involution into the state of evolution because of the proximity of *Puruṣa*. The evolved categories in the order of derivation are *Mahat* or *buddhi* (cosmic intelligence), *ahaṅkāra* (self-consciousness), *manas* (mind), the five organs of perception, the five organs of action, the five *tanmātras* (casual and subtle elements), and the five gross elements of ether, air, light, water and earth after their *pancīkaraṇa* (combination). These twenty three categories form along with *Prakṛti* twenty-four categories, and the twenty-fifth category is *Puruṣa*. From *ahaṅkāra in* its *sāttvic* aspect are derived the *manas* (mind) and the organs of sense, from *ahaṅkāra* in its *rājasic* aspect are derived the organs of action, while from *ahaṅkāra* in its *tāmasa* aspect are derived five *tanmātrās* (causal elements). *Vijnānabhikṣu* says that the *manas* is produced by the *sāttvika=ahaṅkāra*, the ten organs are produced by the *rājasa-ahaṅkāra* and the five *tanmatras* are produced by the *tāmasa ahaṅkāra*.

---

[1] *Śakti and Śākta*, p. 146.

Whatever may be exact march of evolution, the *Sāṅkhya* system is unable to account how the inactive *Puruṣa* and the unconscious *Prakṛti* got into mutual relation to cause the evolution of the universe. The classical illustration given by it is the *Andha-paṅgu-nyāya, i.e.,* that of lame man getting upon the shoulders of a blind man and pointing the way which is then trodden by the blind man for the benefit of both. This illustration has no real force, because it deals with two agencies having volition and consciousness. But *Puruṣa* has no volition and *Prakṛti* is a non-intelligent principle. It is difficult to understand how *Buddhi* which is the principle of intelligence can be an evolute of the non-intelligent principle *Prakṛti.*

The *Śākta* philosophy has adumbrated a scheme of thirty-six *tattvas* (categories).[1] This scheme has enabled it to bridge the gulf from *Puruṣa* to *Prakṛti* and to fuse together the concepts of *caitanya* and *jaḍa* in a most original and remarkable manner. The thirty six *tattvas* are, the twenty four *Sāṅkhyatattvas* from *Pṛthivi* to *Prakṛti,* and the superior *tattvas,* viz., *Puruṣa, Māyā,* the five *kancukas*[2] (*kāla, niyati, vidyā, rāga*), *Śuddhavidyā, Nāda or Sadāśivatattva, Bindu* or *Īśvaratattva. Śakti* and *Śiva.* These thirty-six *tattvas* are divided in a three groups, viz., the five *śuddhatattvas* called *Śivatattva* (*Śiva, Śakti, Nāda or Sadāśiva, Bindu or Iśvara, and Śuddhavidyā*), the seven pure-impure (*śuddhāśuddha*) *tattvas* viz., the five *kancukas* and *Māyā* and *Puruṣa,* and the twenty-four impure (*aśuddha*) *tattvas* viz., from *Prakṛti* to *Pṛthvi.* It is worthy of note that this scheme of *tattvas* enables the *Śākta philosophy* to solve the problem which is insoluble in the *Advaita* philosophy as to how the changeless *Brahman* becomes the changing universe, and how the *One can become Many.* In the *Śākta* cosmogony the central idea is that *Śakti* issues out of the Absolute and is not different from *Brahman,* being only the kinetic aspect of *Brahman. Nāda* and *Bindu* are therefore only aspects of *Śiva-Śakti. Nāda* is not the gross sound heard by the ear. The gross sound heard by the ear belongs to the *aśuddha tattva* categories and is only the *guṅa* or attribute of *ākāśa* (space). *Nāda* is the first stress of *Śakti* in the process of creation. *Bindu* does not mean a dot or a drop. It is the point into which the universe had *shrunk* at the time of the great dissolution (*mahāpralaya*), and out of which the universe manifests itself progressively at the time of the primeval creation. The next evolute is *śuddha vidyā*. Thus the *śuddhatattvas* form a gentle passage from formlessness to form.

---

[1] *Garland of Letters,* pp. 48-49.

[2] *Śakti and Śākta,* p. 52.

The next step in the transition is effected by the *śuddhatattvas*. Out of the *kancukas*, *kāla* is but creative energy. *Kāla* is the *Time-Principle*. The other *kancukas* are other aspects of creative energy. We now come to the *tattvas*, *Māyā* and *Puruṣa*. *Māyā* creates the cognition of Subject and Object. The *kancukas* break up integrated knowledge of the whole into small fractions and hence each has only a limited knowledge as the result of such fragmentation and the universe undergoes differentiation and heterogeneity in the shape of the twenty-four impure *tattvas*.

Turning to the microcosm, the philosophy of *Śaktism* has laid stress on our having a sacramental conception of the human body because the locus of the attainment of God realisation is situated in it. Its exposition of *yoga* is unique and has got a special glory and attractiveness. It says that the *Kuṇḍalinīśakti* (the Supreme Power in the human body) could be roused so as to purify the body and to enable the soul to realise the Oversoul in this very life and in our body. According to it[1] there are six *cakras*, viz., *mūlādhāra*, *svādhiṣṭhāna*,

---

[1] *The Garland of Letters*, ch. XV.

maṇipūra, anāhata, viśuddhi and *ājñā*. The supreme locus of the Oversoul (*Paramātmā*) is in the *Sahasrāra*[1] where the soul can behold and have communion and union with the Oversoul. When the *Kuṇḍalinīśakti*[2] is roused by appropriate means, it travels along the *susumnā nādī* in the vertebral column (*Merudaṇḍa*) taking the soul along with it to behold and to realise the Oversoul.

There is much talk about the *Cakras* as *lotuses* and about the petals of the lotus and about the *Bijākṣaras* there and also about the deities who reside therein. But this queen of sciences is practically unknown today despite such grand Hiloquent talk. The socalled *lotuses* are not like external flowers. They have a physiological aspect and a psychological aspect. Taking the former aspect, they are in the *coccygeal*, the *sacral*, the *lumbar*, the *dorsal* and the *cervical* regions of the spinal column. The lotuses in their psychological aspect are regions of light and energy which are psychologically and spiritually realised during life. *The yoga Nāḍis are not the ordinary material nerves but subtler lines of direction along which the vital forces go.* In regard to the physiological side it is : *On each side of the vertebral column there is a chain of ganglia connected with nerve fibre, called the sympathetic cord (iḍā and piṅgalā) extending all the way from the base of the skull to the coccyx. This is in communication with the spinal cord.*[3]

---

1. *Ṣaṭcakra-nirūpaṇam : Tantric Texts*, Vol. II.
2. *Saundaryalaharī*, V.9.
3. See *Introduction to the Serpent Power* by Arthur Avalon.

It is when we bear clearly in mind this parallelism of the physiological and psychological regional centres that we can realise the value of the *Śākta* philosophy about the microcosm. The *Iḍā* and the *Piṅgalā Nāḍis* are not merely nerve tissues but are also channels of *Prāṇaśakti*. *Yoga* has as its basis, the purity of the body. A well-known stanza which occurs in *Manu*[1] and also in other texts, says that we must cleanse the impurities of the body by *Prāṇāyāma* and purify our sins by *Dhāraṇā* and disconnect ourselves with the world of sense by *Pratyāhāra* and remove all anti-divine forces by *Dhyāna*. *Yama* and *Niyama* form the base for the fabric of yogic ecstacy. Thus the body is purified by *prāṇāyāma*. Their impurity hinders the ascent of the *Kuṇḍalinīśakti* whereas their purity aids its ascent. The main *nāḍis* are fourteen, and of these *Iḍā* and *Piṅgalā* and *Suṣumnā* are the most important and among these *Suṣumnā* is supreme, because the *Prāṇaśakti* goes through it from the *Mūlādhāra* to the *Sahasrāra*. We must not allow ourselves to be deflected from the narrow path of clear, correct and comprehensible thought by imaginative and flowery descriptions. For instance, *Idā*, *Piṅgalā* and *Suṣumnā* are compared to the famous rivers *Gangā*, *Yamunā* and *Sarasvatī*, and the *Mūlādhāra* which is their meeting place is called the *Triveṇi*. Again, the *Iḍā Nāḍi* is called the pale moon and the *Piṅgalā Nādi* is called the red sun, while the *Suṣumnā Nāḍi* is called the fire.[2]

---

[1] See Woodroffe, *The Serpent Power : Introduction*.

[2] VI. 72 : See also *Darśanopaniṣad : Prāṇāyāmalakṣaṇa* (*Yoga Upaniṣads*, Adyar).

Thus we have inside the *Meru-daṇḍa* (spinal column) the six centres from *Mūlādhāra* to *Ājñā* which are called the seats of *Śakti*, and above them the *Sahasrāra* which is the seat of *Śiva*. The *Śākta* literature about them is of astounding magnitude and it will not be possible to go into the details here. It must however be remembered that the path of *Kundalinī yoga* is not only the path of purity but also the path of strength of body and mind and the path of *siddhis* (occult and exalted powers). The *Yogasūtras*[1] of *Patañjali* describe them in even greater detail. A well known verse in the *Śvetāsvataraopaniṣad*[2] says that to a person of yogic attainments who has made his body a frame of fiery *yoga* (*Prāptayogāgnimayaṁ śarīram*), there will be no disease or death. It is said also that he can enjoy infinite eternal bliss by the union of the soul and the Oversoul in the *Sahasrāracakra*.

We have thus far dealt with the evolution of the cosmos and the attainment of god-realisation by means of *yoga* in this life and in our present body. But the excellence of *Śaktism* lies not only in its emphasis on *yoga* but also in its synthesis of various aspects of *yoga*. *Yoga* makes *bhakti* a concentrated and flaming passion of devotion and fans *jnāna* into an incandescent white flame of vision. Whithout its aid *bhakti* would degenerate into tearful feeling and *jnāna* would degenerate into dialectics. *Śaktism* harmonises *Haṭhayoga*, *Rājayoga*, *Mantrayoga*, and *Layayoga* which left to themselves are made destroy one another.

---

1. See *Śāṇḍilya Up*. ch. I,iv.
2. *Yogasūtra* III *Vibhuti pāda*.

Quite as important to remember is the stress laid by *Śaktism* on *Mantras* and especially on the *Gāyatrīmantra,* the *Haṁsamantra* and the *Pancadasī* and the *Ṣodasi*. It says that when the *Mantracaitanya* is roused, it becomes a potent means of beneficence to the world and spiritual uplift to the individual because of the grace of the *Devatā* of the *Mantra*. *Mantra vidyā,* the science of thought and its expression in language is evolved from the *Logos* or *Śabdābrahaman*. It is in this sense that the universe is said to be *composed of letters*.[1] The *Varṇamālā* (garland of letters) is the necklace of *Kālī*. Of course the supreme symbol and expression is *Praṇava* (*OM*). The *Lalitopākhyana* gives us the *Sahasrākṣarīmantra* (the *mantra* of one *thousand letters*).[2]

The practices and tenets of the *Śakti-cult* make us realise that *Śakti* is *Saguṇabrahman*.[3] Devī is possibly the Second Being who rouses up the potential energy of the Supreme Being, whom we may designate *Nirguṇabrahman*. This is perhaps the reason why Śaṅkara addresses her as *parabrahmamahiṣī* i.e. the queen consort of the Supreme Being. Though *Śakti* is commonly known as *Pradhānā*, *Prakṛti*, and *Māyā*, she is none of these. For *Pradhānā*, according to the *Sāṅkhyās*, is an object with *jaḍatvam* and consequently devoid of all spirituality. Again in the *Viśiṣṭādvaita* theory *Prakṛti* is in the nature of things inactive and inanimate. As *Māyā*, it is the root cause of all delusion. *Śakti* then, as Farquhar puts it, is *mūla-prakṛti* and the whole world is merely, the unfolding of the *Śakti*.[1] We may close this chapter with a word about the relation which *Yoga bears* to *Śakti-culture*.[2] The *Yoga* system as understood relates to *six* centres, which are *mūlādhāra, svādhiṣthāna, maṇipūra, anāhata, viśuddha,* and *ājnā*.[3] The *ājñā* is distinctively the seat of *Śakti*. Without this, the first could not function for it is in the nature of *Puruṣa* that he could not be active by himself and the urge should come from a non-external force which is *Śakti*. This is what we mean by the inseparability of *Śiva-Śakti*.[4] It is this admirable conception of the divine which has stirred the mind of the masses and has facilitated spiritual progress in this ancient country of ours.[5]

---

[1] *Yogasūtra* :- II 12.

[2] Woodroffee : *The Garland of Letters (Varṇamālā)* (1922).

[3] *Ibid* pp. 33-4.

● ● ●

---

1. *Brahmāndapurāṇa* ch. 40.
2. *Religious literature of India*. p. Ū.
3. *Ibid*, Garbe. *Sāṅkhya and Yoga*, pp. 34, 36.
4. Ibid p.91, *Kundalinī Śakti is the Śakti resident in man and latent in mūlādhāra.*
5. G. Rao. *Hindu Iconography*, pp. 328-39

CHAPTER-VI

Śaktipīṭhas

There have been some speculations regarding the origin of te *Śāktapīṭhas*. D.C. Sircar maintains that the *pīṭhas* are nothing but the transformation of the early *yoni-kuṇḍas, yoni* of the Great Mother, and *liṅga* of the god *Mahādeva* being taken as the symbols of creation.[1] It has been pointed out that the *Tīrtha-yātrā* section in the *Vanaparvan* of the *Mahābhārata*, which is probably earlier than the rise of the Guptas in the fourth century A.D., refers at least to three *Śākta* places associated with the *Yoni* and *Stana* of *Śakti*. These are the *Yonikuṇḍas* near the *Pañcanada* (Punjab) and on the hill or mountain-peak called *Udyatparvata*, and the *Stanakuṇḍa* on the peak known as *Gaurīśikhara* (*cf. Mahābhārata* III, 82,23-25; III, 84,93-95 and -53). The name of the *Gaurīśikhara* (literally, the peak of *Gaurī*, a form of the mother goddess) probably connects the peak with the *Himālayas*. The *Mahābhārata* seems to locate both the *Gaurīśikhara* and *Udyatparvata* in eastern India, the latter probably in the Gaya region. Their exact location is not beyond doubt, although it is tempting to identify the Gaurīśikhara with the peak of the name placed by ther *Pīṭhanirṇaya* in the *Kāmarūpa* country in the *Gwuahati* region of Assam. The *Bhīmāsthāna* (literally, the resort of *Bhīmā*, a form of the mother-goddess) was situated on the Karamar not far from *Shahbazgarhi* in the Peshawar District of the North-Western Frontier Province.[1]

---

[1] D.C. Sircar, *The Śākta Pīṭhas*, 7f. It is really difficult to understand why of all the *Śākta* places mentioned in the *Mahābhārata* D.C. Sircar selected the *yonikuṇḍas* of *Bhīmasthāna* and the *stanakuṇḍa* on the peak of *Gauriśikhara*, when he himself points out that there are other places of pilgrimage, *designated Mātṛ-tīrtha* or *Devī-tītha* apparently named after the Mother Goddess. Of course, as a reason he states that *it is unknown whether they were associated with any of the limbs of the goddess.* (*The Śākta Pīṭhas, 9*). If by the term *pīṭha* he means the places associated with the different limbs of Devī, them how can he maintain the tradition about the four *pīṭhas* mentioned by him in the same connection or the theory that *this philosophical concept of the Catuṣpīṭha was either the cause or the effect of the early recognition of four holy places as Pīṭhas'* (ib., 11), as my later discussions will show. It should be noted further that the term *pīṭha* is not always taken to be the shrine containing the limb of the Great Mother, for according to *Amarakoṣa* (2.6.W.F), it is defined as an *āsana* or seat, evidently denoting the place where the goddess resides.

The *yonikuṇḍa* of Bhīmasthāna on the *Pañcanada* and on the *Udyatparvata* are not included in the traditional list of the 51 *pīṭhas*, while the *Stanakuṇa* on Gaurīśikhara, variously located near Kāmarūpa or other places of eastern India, is also conspicuous by its absence in the same list. The *piṭha* of Kāmākhyā is no doubt called *yonipīṭha*, while Jālandhara may be taken to represent the *stanapīṭha* inasmuch as according to the traditional, list, the *stana* of Devī fell here, but *Oḍiyāna* and *Pūrṇagiri*, two other earliest *pīṭhas*, can never be associated with the *stana* or the *yoni* of the Great Mother. D.C. Sircar further asserts that the conception of *Catuṣpīṭha* as found in the *Hevajratantra* and the *Kālikāpurāṇa*, may have been associated with a conception of the *Sahajayāna* school of the Buddhists, according to which one can rise to eternal bliss from sexual pleasure. A *Sahajayāna* text entitled *Catuṣpīṭhatantra* and its commentaries (one of which was copied in 1145 A.D.; cf. H.P. Sastri, Cat. *Palm-leaf and Selected Paper Manuscripts belonging to the Durbar Library, Nepal II,* p. viii) speak of the four *Pīṭhas as Ātmapīṭha, Parapīṭha, Yogapīṭha* and *Guhyapīṭha* and deal with the various kinds *Vajrasattva's* intercourse with the *Yoginīs*, such as *Prajñāpāramitā*, and others. This philosophical concept of the *Catuṣpīṭha* was either the cause or the effect of the early recognition of four holy places as *Pīṭhas*.[1] The emphasis on sex and sexual pleasure as given by D.C. Sircar has got an absolutely different meaning in the *Tantra*, as it has already been shown. Further, the *Hevajratantra* (c. 690 A.D.) which gives an account of the four *Pīṭhas*, and the *Kubjikāmata* enumerating five, are older than the *Sahajayāna* school of the Buddhists. The *Hindus* never maintain that the *pīṭhas* are the result of *stana* and *yoni* worship. Contrarily, the *pīṭhas* are associated with other parts of the body of *Devī* as well.

---

[1] *The Śāktapīṭhas* 8-9.

The *yoni* worship might have been prevalent among the people of the pre-historic *Indus* valley where Sir Marshall discovered ring stones and interpreted them to be symbols of *yoni* and object of worship. The *Hindu Tāntrikas*, however, never worship the *yoni* excepting at the time of *Cīnācāra sādhanā* and the *yoni* stone at *Kāmākhyā*, and so one fails to understand how *yoni* worship led to the rise of the *Pīṭhas*.

---

[1] Ibid., 11

Every scholar, who has dealt with the subject of *Pīṭha*, maintains that there were originally four *pīṭhas* and the number began to multiply till it became 51 or 108[1]. In the *Tānrtric* treatise *Matasāra*, which *evidently* quotes an earlier tradition, in view of the fact that the number of the *pīṭhas* are always on the increase and never in the process of decline, three *Pīṭhas* are mentioned, *Oḍiyāna, Jāla* and *Pūrṇagiri;* the second to the south of the first and third to the north of the second.[2] Thus the three original *pīṭhas* were in the north-western part of India, and of these *Jāla* or *Jālandhara* only can be

---

[1] B. Bhattacharya, *Hevajratantra*; Most of the early tantras, both the Buddhist and the Hindu, refer to four *Pīṭhas*. *Agehānanda Bhārati, l.c.* 88. The list is somewhat altered though the number remains the same in the *KālikāPurāṇa* (64, 43-5). The most interesting account of the *pīṭhas* is furnished by Agehānanda Bhārati, *l.c.,* 85ff. The *prāṇatoṣanītantra* divides the *pīṭhas* into three groups, *siddhapīṭhas, pīṭhas* associated with a particular limb of the *Great Mother* and other *pīṭhas* in which we find practically a list of the *devīsthānas* of different pantheon. According to the traditional list, i.e., the *pīṭhas* of the second group are 50, though sometime a single name is splitted into two and thus the list becomes 51.

[2] *Durbar Library Catalogue,* i. lxviii, 222, no. W.F. It is really curous that this *Tantra* has not attracted the attention of earlier scholars. The account runs as follows:
Śrī-Oḍiyānamahaṁ vande kaulikājñāpravarttakam ।
māyājālamidaṁ divyaṁ dvimātraṁ sarvasiddhidaṁ ।।
taddakṣiṇagatañcative Jālapīṭham namāmyaham ।
tasyottaragataṁ divyaṁ mantratantraprasiddhidam ।।
ekamātragaṭañcaiva śrī-pūṇapīṭhaṁ namāmyaham ।
ardhamātrāparaṁ sūkṣmaṁ svarūpaṁ sarvasiddhidam ।।
Sastri thinks that the writer of the *Matasāra* has confounded *Jāla* with *Mataṅga.* But there is absolutely

---

no reason for this supposition. Sastri was working evidently under the impression that *Pūrṇa* should be located in Eastern India, but the evidence of *Matasāra* goes against such a theory. *Jāla* in the account is clearly *Jālandhara*, as the direction with reference to Oḍḍiyāna indicates. D.C. Sircar points out that number 3 had a mystic significance with many ancient peoples of the world, and so in a later work like *Ānandārṇva* we have reference to three *pīṭhas*, viz., *Kāmarūpa*, *Jālandhara* or *Jalandhara* and *Pūrṇabhūpura* or *Pūrṇagiri*, (*The Śākta Pīṭhas*, 17fn. 2) from which he infers that there was also a tradition about three *pīṭhas*.. which might not have been as old evidenly as the account of the four pīṭhas. If we follow this argument then of course our assigning of the *Matasāra* account to an early date falls through. It should however be noted that in the above description of *Ānadārṇava* we have clearly an account of *prāṇāyāma* and the three *pīṭhas* are supposed to be associated with the three petals supposed to be the *cakra* at the lowest level. (*Des. Cat. Sans. Mss.*, R.A.S.B., viii, Ṅ). We find again the mention of three *pīṭhas*, *Jālandhara*, *Pūrṇagiri* and *Oḍḍiyāna* in connection with the *nyāsa* of the goddess *Śrīvidyā* (*Tantrasāra*, 272). It is certainly not an ordinary enumeration. Here the name of *Kāmarūpa* is absent, though we find it in the *Ānadārṇava*. In the *Kulārṇavatantra* (89), on the other hand, we find the following lines :

Mahāmudrāṁ nabhomudrāṁ Uḍḍiyānaṁ Jālandharam ।
Mūlabandhañca yo vetti sa guruḥ paramo mataḥ ।।

Here we find again how two of the earlier *pīṭhas* are associated with the *mudrā;* but no one will infer from it that the original numbers of the *pīṭhas* were two only. On the other hand in the *Matasāra* we meet with no figurative description, but actual statement of geographical location showing that the tradition quoted in it must be regarded as an earlier one.

associated with the *stana* of the *Great Mother*. This seems to show the unsoundness of the theory maintained by D.C. Sircar. In *Hevajratantra* the number became four viz *Oḍḍiyāna, Jālandhara, Pūrṇagiri* and *Kāmarūpa,* three on the West, and one in the East, in Assam.

They may be located as follows :

1. *Oḍḍiyāna-Swat* valley in north-western India. (It is difficult to accept the view that it was in Dacca, Bangladesh).
2. *Jālandhara-pīṭha,* located in the *Jālandhar* District of the Punjab.
3. *Kāmarūpa*-the *Kāmākhyā pīṭha* on the *Nīlaparvata* in the Gauhati District of Assam.
4. *Pūrṇagiri*-exact identification uncertain.

The three *pīṭhas* of *Oḍḍiyāna, Jālandhara* and *Kāmarūpa* are situated *on the high roads leading to countries outside India-Uḍḍiyāna* situated in the valley of the *Swat* river, easily accessible from the Upper valley of the *Indus*, has been the meeting place of the people of different origin. It is situated on the high road that connects the Upper Valley of the Indus with *Balkh, Samarcand*, etc., on the one hand, and the *Pamir, Khotan, Kashgar* etc., on the other by the valley of the *Gilgit*. *Jālandhara* is situated on another highway that connects *Tibet* with India through the *Shipki pass,* and *Kāmarūpa* has to a great extent been the centre of activities of foreign peoples who have been coming down from the Northern and North-eastern hills since very ancient time. It is probably not without significance that *Bhāskaravarman* who was the king of *Kāmarūpa* told a Chinese envoy to India that his forefathers had come to India from the country of *Mahācīna* and requested him to send a Sanskrit translation of *Tao-te-king*, the sacred text of *Taoism*, and a portrait of *Lao-tzu*, its founder. In ancient time a land route connected Assam with Western and Southern China through the *Patkai* hills and Upper Burma, and this route was generally followed by the invaders and immigrants from the North-East.[1]

The above observations seem to indicate that the *pīṭhas* developed in India at the initial stage under foreign influence. The course of ancient Indian history shows that foreign elements primarily worked in the field of religion in India centring round *Buddhism*. It should be noted that one of the earlist *Mahāyāna* texts (*the Hevajratantra*), refers to the *pīṭhas*, and the *Kubjikāmata* which also was inspired by traditions of the West (*infra*),refers to them. If we remember the fact that after the death of the *Buddha* various *stūpas* were built on the different remanants of his mortal coil, we can at once realise wherefrom the idea of the *pīṭhas* came into the field of *Hindu* religion. In the *Devīstotra* of the *Mahābhārata*, which has been assigned by eminent authorities with the trans-*Hīmālayan* region, Devā is described as one *who dwellest continually near the Caityas and the mountain ridges* (*Jamun-kaṭaka-ċaityeṣu nityaṃ sannihitālaye*).[2] It shows has *Śaktism* came into initimate contact with *Buddhism* and this naturally led to the borrowing of the *Buddhistic* ideas by the *Śāktas* in the days

---

1. P.C. Bagchi, *Studies in the Tantras*, 48-9.
2. Muir, *Original Sanskrit Texts*, iv, 368

following the *Kuṣāṇa* supremacy. D.C. Sircar points out that according to certain later *purāṇas* and *Tantras* (*Devībhāgavata*, vii, ch. 30; *Kālikāpurāṇa*, ch. 18; etc.), *Śiva* became inconsolable at *Dakṣa's* sacrifice and he wandered over the earth dancing madly with *Satī's* dead body on his shoulder (or, head). *The gods now became anxious to free Śiva from his infatuation and conspired to deprive him of his wife's dead body. Thereupon Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śani entered the dead body by yoga and disposed of it gradually. The places where pieces of Satī's dead body fell are said to have became Pīṭhas, i.e., holy seats or resorts of the mother-goddess, in all of which she is represented to be constantly living in some form together with Bhairava, i.e. a form of her husband Śiva.* According to a modified version of this story, it was *Viṣṇu* who, while following *Śiva*, cut *Satī's* dead body on *Śiva's* shoulder or head piece by piece. The story of the association of particular limbs of the mother-goddess with the *Śākta tīrthas*, which may have some relation with the *Tāntric* ritual called *Pīṭhanyāsa*, belongs, as already pointed out, to the latest stage in the development of an ancient tale. But the story may have some connection with *Buddhist* legends regarding the worship of *Buddha's* bodily relics and the construction of *Stūpas* in order to enshrine them (*cf. Select Inscriptions*, I, pp. 84, 102ff., 120 etc.) as well as with those concerning the various manifestations of *Buddha* in the *Jambudvīpa*.[1]

The number four of *pīṭhas became a somewhat traditional one, for we find the same number in the*

---

[1] D.C. Sircar, *The Śākta Pīṭhas*, 6-7.

Kālikāpurāṇa, though, the list is a little different; *Oḍra*, seat of the goddess *Kātyāyanī* and the god *Jagannātha; Jālaṣaila*, seat of the goddess *Caṇḍī* and the god *Mahādeva; Pūrṇa* or *Pūrṇaśaila*, seat of the goddess *Pūrṇeśvarī* and the god *Mahānātha;* and *Kāmarūpa*, seat of the deities *Kāmeśvari* and *Kāmeśvara.*[1] In the above list we may note two pecularities : *first*, an attempt has been made to identify *Vaiṣṇava* god and goddess with *Śiva* and *Śakti* with reference to *Oḍra* or Orissa where *Vimalā* is identified with *Kātyāyanī* and the *Vaiṣṇava* god Jagannātha with Śiva; *secondly*, all the Śākta *pīṭhas* have got a *Śiva* sanctuary. The earliest reference to a *Śākta piṭha* having *Śaiva* sanctuary is to be found in an inscription of the latter Gupta age informing us that one *Īśvara*, the wife of a petty ruler in *Jālandhara*, constructed a temple of *Śiva* in memory of her husband.[2]

The *Kālikāpurāṇa*, however, thus locates the four *pīṭhas* : *Oḍra*, in the West; *Jālaśaila*, in the north; *Pūrṇa* or *Pūrṇaśaila* in the South, and *Kāmarūpa* in the East. The Buddhist work *Sādhanamālā* omits the name of *Jālandhara* and mentions *Śrīhaṭṭ* or *Sirihatta* in its place.[3]

Another text mentions the additional name of *Mataṅga*. *Mataṅga* is in *Śrīśaila*, famous as the centre of *Śākta* worship in *Bhavabhūti's Mālatīmādhavam*. There is however, a *Mataṅgapīṭha* mentioned in the *Nīlatantra* which is identified with

---

1. *Kālikāpurāṇa*, 64. p.43-5.
2. *Ep. Ind. i*, 12ff; Bhandarkar, no. 1790.
3. *Sādhanamālā*, 453, 455.

modern *Mataṅgāśrama* at *Bakraur* on the *Phalgu*, opposite Bodh-Gaya in Bihar.[1]

If the *Mataṅgapīṭha* be located in *Śrīśaila*, it will raise an interesting issue which is explained by *Siddhapañcāśikā*, in which the scene of the work is on the *Mahendrācala* usually identified with Eastern *Ghāṭs* and *Śiva* is given the epithet of *S(ś) śabaram śivam*.[2] The *Śabaras* are a Proto-Australoid tribe inhabiting the eastern coast and here we have a definite evidence of how aboriginals, possibly with their religious practices, were being inducted into the *Tāntric* fold and a shrine of their local goddess came to be considered a *pīṭha*.

While by this process of absorption and assimilation the number of *pīṭhas* began increasing, we meet with at least fifteen *devīsthānas* or places of mother goddess worship in the *Ādyāstotra* of the *Brahmayāmala*.[3] As the list is an interesting one it is enumerated below :

---

[1] D.C. Sircar, *The Śākta Pīṭhas*, 91.

[2] *Durbar Library Catalogue*, i, 57, lxxv.
Śrīmanmahendrācale ramye khaṭvāta śikhare sthitam |
sarvvajñaṁ sa (śa) varaṁ Śivaṁ paramakāraṇaṁ | |

[3] R.M. Chatterjee, *Vividha-tantra-saṁgraha* or *Tantra-kalpadruma*, Prakīrṇ-aṁśa 48.
Om hrīṁ
Brahmāṇī brahmaloke ca vaikuṇṭh Sarvamaṅgalā |
Indrāṇī amarāvatyāmambikā varuṇālaye | |
yamālaye Kālarūpā kuverabhavane Śubhā | |
Mahānandāgnikoṇe ca vāyavyāṁ Mṛgavāhinī |
nairṛtyām Raktadantā ca aiśānyāṁ Śūladhāriṇī | |
pātāle Vaiṣṇavīrūpā siṁhale Devamohinī |
surasā maṇidvīpe laṅkāyāṁ Bhadrakālikī | |
Rāmeśvarī setuvandhe Vimalā puruṣottame |
Viraujā auḍradeśe ca Kāmākhyā nīlaparvate |

1. *Devamohinī* in Siṃhala
2. *Surasā* in Maṇidvīpa
3. *Bhadrakālikā* in Laṅkā
4. *Rāmeśvarī* in Setubandha
5. *Vimalā* in Puruṣottama
6. *Virajā* in Oḍradeśa
7. *Kāmākhyā* in Nilaparvata
8. *Kālikā* in Vaṅgadeśa
9. *Maheśvarī* in Ayodhyā
10. *Annapūrṇā* in Vārāṇasī
11. *Gayeśvarī* in Gayākṣetra
12. *Bhadrakālī* in Kurukṣsetra
13. *Kātyāyanī* in Vraja
14. *Mahāmāyā* in Dvārakā
15. *Maheśvarī* in Mathurā

The above *devisthānas*, not many of them *pīṭhas*, in described after stating how the goddess is known by various names in *Vaikuṇṭha*, *Amarāvatī*, *Pātāla* etc., all lying in the imagination of the *Sādhaka*. Some pecularities, however, are to be noted in the above account : nine of the above fifteen names should be located in Eastern India; of the four earlier *Pīṭthas*, three-*Oḍḍiyāna*, *Jālandhara* and *Pūrṇagiri*, are conspicuous by their absence in this accqunt; again, while in the earlier account *Kātyāyanī* is associated with *Jagannātha - Puruṣottama*, in the present one we find her in *Vraja*; several

---

Kālikā vaṅgadeśe ca ayodhyāyāṁ Maheśvarī I I
vārāṇasyāmannapūrṇā gayākṣetre Gayeśvarī I
(Gayāsurī?) kurukṣetre Bhadrakālī vraje Kātyāyanī parā I I
Dvārakāyāṁ Mahāmāyā mathurāyāṁ Maheśvarī. I

Piṭhas are located in predominantly *Vaiṣṇava* areas like *Vraja, Mathurā, Dvārakā, Ayodhyā* and *Kurukṣetra*.

In the Mss. of *Kubjikātantra* preserved in the *Asiatic Society, Calcutta*, and noted by D.C. Sircar, there is a list of forty-two *Pīṭhas* extending from *Hiṅgula* in *Baluchistan* to *Vimalā* at Puri which is called *Vimalākṣetra* (Orissa) in the East, and from Nepal in the North to Siṃhala in the South.[1] The list, however, appears to have been complied haphazardly. It refers to the *Pīṭha* of Maṇipura which, if identified with the modern state of that name, would of course be, the extreme Eastern limit of the *Pīṭha-kṣetras*. Similarly, *Baḍarī* or the present *Badarikāśrama*, is mentioned as a *pīṭha*, but no mention is made of *Kedāra* which is mentioned in the *Nīlatantra*. This seems to indicate that the list of forty-two *pīṭhas*, as inserted in it, may not be an authentic one.

The number of the *Pīṭhas* gradually went on increasing till it became fifty in *Tantrasāra* and fifty-one in the *Prāṇatoṣaṇītantra*.[2] There is also a tradition about 108 *Pīṭhas*, a number sacred with the *Hindus* of all sects. These 108 places were, however, not *Pīṭhas* in the strict sense containing the parts of the body of the wife of *Śiva*, but simply the places where mother worshp of any kind prevailed. The bigger account embraces the whole of India and even beyond, from *Hiṅgula* or *Hiṅglāja* in Baluchistan to *Maṇipūr* and *Tripura* in the East and from the Lake *Mānasa* in Tibet to Laṅkā or *Śrīlaṅka* (Ceylon) in the extreme South.

---

[1] *D.C. Sircar, I.c.*, 19.

[2] *Ibid*, off; *Prāṇatoṣaṇī*, 234.

The *Sammohatantra* refers to the *Śāktapīṭhas* like self-evolved Hiṅgulāja (*Svāyambhuve Hiṅgulāje*) as well as other *pīṭhas* like *Vidyāpīṭha, Śaivapīṭha pīṭha, Saurapīṭha* and *Gaṇapati* or *Gaṇeśapīṭha.*[1] The statement is no doubt interesting. But here the term *pīṭha* may refer to either the seats of worship or the ways of *Tāntric* practice. In any case, the account shows how different gods and goddesses of the *Hindu* pantheon were gradually being brought under the *Tāntric* system of worship. Three *Śaivapīṭhas*, four *Vaiṣṇavapīṭhas*, two *Saura pīṭhas* and five *Gāṇapatyapīṭhas* have been referred to in the account.[2]

Let us now try to make a zonal division of the *pīṭhas*. According to the ancient Indian conception India was divided into five distinct zones which is very explicitly indicated in the *Kāvyamīmāṃsā* of *Rājaśekhara* :

1.*Vārāṇasyāḥ parataḥ pūrvadeśaḥ* - i.e., the Eastern country lies to the East of Vārāṇasī or Benares.

2.*Māhiṣmatyāḥ parataḥ Dakṣiṇadeśaḥ* - i.e., the Southern country lies to the South of *Māhiṣmatī* identified with *Māndhata* on The river Narmada.

---

[1] *Svāyambhuve Hiṅgulāje pīṭham śaktimayaṁ matam*। Other *pīṭhas* referred to are, *Cāndra, Svāyambhuva, Cīna, Bauddha* and *Vaidika.*

[2] .... *Śaive trividhameva ca*।
caturvidhṁ Vaiṣṇave syāt Saure dvividhaṁ īritaṁ।
Gāṇape pañcadhā pīṭhamanyo' pi piṭhavistaram।।
(P.C. Bagchi, *Studies in the Tantras,* 97)

3.*Devasabhāyāḥ parataḥ pascāddeśaḥ* - i.e., the Western division lies to the West of Dewas (*Devasabhā*) in Madhya Pradesh.

4.*Pṛthūdakāt parataḥ uttarāpathaḥ* - i.e., the *Uttarāpatha* or northern division lies to the other side of *Pṛthūdaka* or Pehowa near *Thāneswar* in the Haryana.

The fifth division is not mentioned but by implication it is clear that it denoted the present U.P. with a slice of Haryana.[1]

This is however, by no means a scientific division either from the ethnological or from the linguistic point of view. As already pointed out, B.S. Guha has divided the Indian population into six groups which have been sub-divided into four linguistic divisions.[2] It is however difificult to make any clear-cut picture of the Indian sub-continent according to either of the accounts, because the ethonological elements often overlap each other in a particular state and this seems to be true also in case of the linguistic classification. So.we turn to H.Risley's scheme as found in the *Census Report* for 1901 and also in the *Imperial Gazetteer*, i, 292ff. He has divided Indian population into seven physical types with distinct zones[3] :

1. The *Dravidian* type in the larger section of the peninsula which lies to the South of the United Provinces (Uttar Pradesh) and East of about longitude 76S.E.

---

[1] *Kāvyamīmāṁsā*, ch. xvii

[2] *The Vedic Age*, 145.

[3] *Cambridge History of India*, i, Delhi, 1955, 36ff.

2. The Indo-Aryan type in Kashmir, the Punjab from the *Indus* to about the longitude of Ambala (76S,46E) and Rajputana (Rajasthan).
3. The Turko-Iranian type in the N.W. Frontier Province, *Baluchistan*, and those districts of the Punjab and Sind which lie west of the Indus.
4. The Scytho-dravidian type in Sind east of the Indus, Gujarat and the western section of the peninsula as far as about longitude 76SE., that is to say, the (former) Bombay Presidency or Western India generally.
5. The Aryo-Dravidian or Hindustani type in the plain of the Ganges from about longitude 76S, 30E. to 87SE; that is to say, in the eastern fringe of the Punjab, in the United Provinces (Uttar Pradesh), and in Bihar.
6. The Mongoloid type in Burma, Assam (former), and the sub-Himalayan tract which includes Bhutan, Nepal and the fringe of the United Provinces (Uttar Pradesh), the Punjab, and Kashmir.
7. The Mongolo-Dravidian or Bengali type in Bengal (West Bengal and Bangladesh) and Orissa.

Besides the above seven divisions there are aboriginals in the Santal Parganas, the Chotanagpur Division, the Mahadeo Hills of the Madhya Pradesh and the northern districts of Tamil-Nadu and the Eastern *Ghaṭ* region to the north of it, who speak

Austric language and may be classed under the Proto-Australoid tribe mentioned by B.S. Guha.

Let us now see under which division the *pīṭhas* fall. Thus *Oḍḍiyāna* in the *Swat* valley would come under the Turko-Iranian region while *Jālandhara* and *Pūrṇagiri* lying to the north of it in the Indo-Aryan region. *Kāmarūpa,* on the other hand, falls in the Mongoloid area. Thus the earliest *Pīṭhas* developed in the region outside Madhyadeśa, identical with the *Āryāvarta* of the *Baudhāyana* and *Vasiṣṭha Dharmasūtras* and the *Mahābhāṣya* of Patañjali, regarded as the citadel of orthodox culture.[1] This would show that the concept of *Pīṭha* was generally heterodox in character and this also shows that the earlier *Tantras* referring to them were of heterodox nature.

This brings to the forefront two interesting facts; *first,* the Madhyadeśa or *Āryāvarta* which was the citadel of brahmanical orthodoxy was considered to be the best centre of *Tāntric* culture;[2] *secondly, Tāntric* teachers lived beyond the Pamir in Central Asia, showing indirectly that *Tāntrism* flourished even outside the borders of India.

We find that many of the *Pīṭhas* came to be located in the orthodox region. Thus, the *Prāṇatoṣaṇītantra* locates *six pīṭhas* in the

---

[1] *Cambridge History of India,* i, Delhi, 1955, 36ff.

[2] This list was certainly drawn up at a time when the authority of the orthodox *Āgamas* was a little undermined by a rise of the heterodox schools. But it still the old tendency according to which the *ācāryas* or North Indian origin were given the first place. (*Studies in the Tantras,* 18)

Madhyadeśa. Of course the largest share is taken by Bengal which accounts for *sixteen Pīṭhas* This is in quite keeping with the fact of Bengal being the largest centre of *Śākta* worship when the *Prāṇatoṣaṇī* was composed. In contrast to *six Pīṭhas* in the Madhyadeśa, the work speaks of four in the *Himālayan* region (*Kāśmīra, Mithilā, Lake Mānasa, Nepāla*), three in Assam (*Śīlahaṭa, Kāmākhyā, Jayantī*, possibly *Jayantiya* Hill), two in the Punjab (*Jvālāmukhī* and *Jālandhara*), three in Bihar (*Baidyanātha, Sonanada* and *Māgadha*), two in Andhra (*Godāvarī, Śri-parvata*) and one each in Maharashtra (*Janasthāna*), Gujarat, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Orissa (*Virajākṣetra* in Puri), Tripura and two in Madhyapradesh (*Bhairava-parvata* in *Avanti, Rāmagiri*), while *Hiṅgulā* is located in Baluchistan and another *Śakarā*, i.e., *Sukkur* in Karachi. It is really curious that the list omits *Pūrṇagiri*. Either it was not known to the writer of *Prāṇatoṣaṇī* or it disappeared under *Muslim* occupation.

The list differs materially from the account of the *Devi-sthānas* given in the *Āryāstotra*, because we find in it no mention of *Mathurā, Annapūrṇā* in *Vārāṇasī, Devamohinī* in *Siṃhala* etc. Of the *fifty two pīṭhas* again several are called *Siddha-pīṭhas*. Thus quoting the 7th *paṭala* of the *Kubjikātantra*, the *Prāṇatoṣaṇī* states:

Śrūyatāṃ sāvadhānena siddhapīṭham pativrate |
yasmin sādhanamātreṇa sarvasiddhiśvaro bhavet ||

Māyāvatī Madhupurī Kāśī Gorakṣakāriṇī |
Hiṅgulā ca mahāpīṭhaṃ tathā Jālandharān punaḥ ||

Jvālāmukhī mahāpīṭhaṃ tathā Godāvarī priye |
Nepālaṃ Karṇasutrañca Mahākarṇaṃ tathā priye ||

Ayodhyā ca Kurukṣetraṃ Siṃhanādaṃ manoramam ।
Maṇipuraṃ Hṛṣikeśaṃ Prayāgañca tapovanam ।।

Badarī ca mahāpīṭham Ambikā ardhanālakam ।
Triveṅī ca mahāpīṭhaṃ Gaṅgāsāgarasaṅgamam ।।

Nārikelañca Virajā Uḍḍyānañca māheśvari ।
Kamalā Vimalā caiva tathā Māhiṣmati purī ।।

Vārāhī Tripurā caiva Vāgmatī Nīlavāhinī ।
Govardhanaṃ Vindhyagiriḥ Kāmārūpaṃ Kalau yuge ।।

Gaṇṭākarṇo Hayagrīvo Mādhavaśca sureśvari ।।
Kṣīragrāmaṃ Baidyanāthaṃ jānīyādvāmalocane.[1] ।।

Thus *Uḍḍiyāna (Oḍḍiyāna)*, though described as a *siddhapīṭha*, is not mentioned in the list of fifty-one *Pīṭhas*. We have also in the same work an account of one hundred and eight *Pīṭhas*. The accounts show again how by the process of compromise and assimilation of different devi-places came to be regarded as seats of *Pīṭhadevis*. We may note some such cases. Thus the *Pīṭha* of Jayantī was clearly a place of tribal goddess-worship. As regards *Kanyāśrama*, it may be noted that the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* (c. 60-80 A.D.) states - *Beyond this (Balita=modern Varkkallai, 8.42′ N, 76.43′E) there is another place called Comari, at which are the Cape of Comari and a harbor; hither come those men who wish to consecrate themselves for the rest of their lives, and bathe and dwell in celibacy and women also do the same; for it is told that a goddess once dwelt here and bathed.*[2] In this account of the *Periplus* we have evidently a reference to the cult of a goddess in the *Pāṇḍya* country which was later on transformed into a *pīṭha*. In 108 list we find that *Devakī*, mother of Kṛṣṇa (*Mādhavi Mathurāyāñca Devaki Yādaveśvari)* has been regarded as a *Śakti*, while Yaśodā, Vṛndā and Rādhā, associated with *Vraja-Gokula*, originally *Vaiṣṇava* deities, are similarly transformed into *Śāktadevis*. This process worked at the root of multiplying the number of *Pīṭhas*, which from originally three or four ultimately became hundred and eight. *Kāmarūpa* is described as the best of the *Pīṭhas*, where *Mādhava-Kṛṣṇa* is called *Umānanda-bhairava*. *Kāmarūpa* is said to contain nine *Pīṭhas*, but actually in the ślokas we find the names of six *Vidyās*.[1] The names of *Mahāvidyās* like *Kālī* and *Tārā* are conspicuous by their absence,[2] though in the *Mahācīnācārakrama* and *Brāhmyāmala*, *Vaśiṣṭha* is represented as performing the worship of the Goddess *Tārā* according to *Cīnācāra* in the *Nīlaparvata* of *Kāmākhyā*. P.C. Bagchi's work shows again the mention of four *Pīṭhas*, - *mantra - pīṭha*, *vidyāpīṭha*, *mudrāpīṭha* and *maṇḍalapīṭha*.[3]

---

[1] *Prāṇatoṣaṇī*, 234.

[2] *The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea, ed.* Schoff, 46.

Of these the *Vidyāpiṭha* may signify the original four *Pīṭhas* and their later developments. *Mantrapīṭha*, *mudrāpīṭha* and *maṇḍālapīṭha* seem to refer to the different kinds of rituals, showing that the term *Pīṭha* did not always signify places supposed to enshrine the different parts of the body of the *Great Mother*, as already stated.

---

1. *eti nava pīṭhāni śaṇsanti Varabhairavaḥ* |
2. *tara Śrībhairavī devī tatra na Kṣetradevatā* |
   pracaṇḍacaṇḍika tatra Mātaṅgī Tripurāmbikā | |
   Bagalā Kamalā tatra Bhuvaneśī sādhūminī |
3. P.C. Bagchi, *Studies in the Tantras*, 111.

CHAPTER-VII

The Tāntric Mahāvidyās

As has been already said the body in the microcosm of the Universe, therefore Kāmakalā or sexual process is responsible for the creation of the world. Although theoretically Śiva and Sakti are inseparable like fire and its burning power still in the case of creation, they have a dual role. Śakti is the male principle of creation and Śakti the female principle and their *Kāmakalā* or union is the process of creation of *Śiva* and Śaki, the former is passive and the latter active contrary to Joḍaprakṛti. As without *Vimarśa*, *Prakāṣa* has no practical value, without *Prakṛti Puruśa* is inactive : so also *Śiva* is *Śava* without *Śakti*. *Śakti* having issued from its source, completes a cycle of creation, preservation and destruction and then returns to its source again. The *Tāntrics* imitate this process through symbolical union with their female partners in *panca ma-kāra* and *cakra ārādhanā*. *Sakti's* return to its source is imitated by the rite of *Ṣaṭcakravedha*. Śakti resides at the same time in the microcosm and macrocosm i.e. in *Piṇḍa* as well as in *Brahmāṇḍa*, it remains latent on the serpent power in the *Mūlādhāracakra* of the human body. This is to be awakened and sent to *Sahasrāra* through different nerve plexuses situated within the body. This is how Śakti will meet its source. The imitation of this method by adopting a woman Partner, though vehemently criticised in later times was itself a process of very high religious order open to only *Vāmācāris, Siddhāntācāris* and *Kaulācāris* who are alone entitled to *Pañca-ma-kāra* worship. These three systems, though almost the same, the *Kulacāra* system is treated to be the best. The *Vāmācāris* worship *Kulastri* which does not mean any housewife but a very beautiful woman specially chosen to function as female principle in whose worship the *Pañca-ma-kāra* method is adopted wherein the use of *Khapuṣpa* or menstrual blood is essential. All women symbolise *Śakti* but since their *Virgin* form is the most attractive one the great goddess is always pleased with the *Virginworship*. The *Kulārṇava* states that wine and meat of *Pañca makāra* are symbols of *Śakti* and *Śiva* respectively and their consumer is Bhairav. When *Śiva Sakti* and *Bhairava* are united, bliss is attained. The drinking of wine is the symbol of drinking the essence derived from the *Śiva-Śakti Sāmarasya* (equilibrium) in the *Sahasrāra*. Sexual union is the symbol of the connection of *Śiva* and *Śakti*. This connection is described as follows:

The Goddess having pierced all the *Kulapathas* in the *Mūlādhāra* (earth) *Maṇipūra* (water), *Swadhiṣṭhāna* (fire), *Anāhata* (air) *viśuddhi* (Space) and *Ājñā* (Mind) enjoys the company of her consort in the Sahasrāra. The *Kaula* is the best system although is the difficult to practise by ordinary *Sādhaka*. The *Syāmārahasya* states that a *Kaula* in order to hide his own self is a *Śākta* at heart, a *Śaiva* outwardly, and a *Vaiṣṇava* in the midst of an assembly. The *Sādhanā* is not restricted by time and space. A real *kaula* makes no difference detween clay and sandalwood paste, son and enemy, cremation ground and home, gold and grass. He is a *brahmadarśī* who has lost all sense of distinction.

Thus in *Śaktitantras Vāmācāra* rites hold its sway. The *Merutantra* describe five types of *Vāmācāras* known as *Sābara, Siddhānta, Cīnā, Vāma* and *Kaulika*. The *Śaktisaṅgamatantra* states that this system was in vogue among the worshippers of Gaṅesh, Rudra, Viṣṇu, *Śiva*, Svayambhu, Veda, Bhairava, Kṣetrapāla, Cīnā, Kāpālikā, Paśupati, Bauddha, Kerala, Vīra-Vaiṣṇava, Sambhava, Candra and Aghora. The worshippers of *Vamācāra*, worship the deity in *Pañca ma*-kāra only at night as the day worship is not suitable for this *rahasyapūja* unlike *Dakṣinācāris*. *Kulācāra* is the most important form of *Vāmācāra* and *Śakti Tantras* define the term *Kula* as śakti and *Akula* as Śiva. The realisation of their equilibrium is the penultimate state of *Pūrṇasaṁvit* and it also means *mūlādhāra* and *Suṣumnā* through which *Kuṇḍalinīśakti* rises to *Sahasrasa*. *Kuṇḍalinīśakti* in Mūlādhāra is called *Kaulinī* or *Kulāyoṣit*. When Kuṇḍalinīśakti pierces the *Candramaṇḍala* or lunar circle of the *Sahasrāra* and unites with *Śiva*, the nectar which flows down and annoints the body of the *Sādhaka* is called *Kulāmṛta*. According to *Rudrayāmala*, *Kaulācāra* is that form of the *Tāntric* cult in which worship of *Kulastrī*, *Kulaguru* and *Kuladevī* is essential. *Sankarācārya* in the *Saundaryalaharī* states this system as *Vedabāhya*. *Devībhāgavata* condemns this as an uncouth way followed only by those who have not faith in the *Vedas*, *Agnihotras* and pious deeds and are belonging to the group of *Pāsaṇḍa, Kāpālika* and *Jainas*. In a subsequent period i.e. when *Mahāvidyā* worship was thought of adopted by the *Kaulācāras* obtained *Vedic* sanction. This is evident in *Kulārṇavatantra* where *Śiva* says-

There are two sects of Kaulas, viz., Pūrva and Uttara. The Pūrvakaulas believe in Śiva-Śakti equilibrium while the Uttrakaulas insist solely on Śakti worship. It is this latter Kaulas who have paved the path for only Śakti worship, the Śrīcakra of Tantra. Śakti cult is a sublimation of the Yoni worship of the Kaulas. The *Śaktisaṅgamatantra* describes the importance of woman in *Kaulācra* as under :

Woman is the mother of the three worlds, its representative and container. All the beauty the world contains is sustained by woman. There is no friend better than a woman, no way better than a woman, no luck better than a woman, no Tapas better than a woman, not Tīrtha better than a woman, no Yoga better than a woman and no Japa better than a woman. And this woman is no other than our deity in Śaktitantra. In Nityotsavatantra a Kaula has been extolled like anything. This Tantra mentions that three and half crores of Tīrthas and all the Gods are within the body of a Kaula. In the Mahāvidyā Upāsanā these Kaulas have retained their supremacy as Sādhakas.

According to Dr. N.N. Bhattacharya all the *tāntric Śākta* deities are creation of the mind, i.e. created according to the desire and menṭal inclination of the aspirant. These deities have no anthropomorphic background and no mythology. Although some of the *Purāṇic* deities have found mention in *Tantra* and they have totally changed their characteristics. The *Purāṇic* stories of the exploits of *Kāli* have nothing to do with the *Tāntric* concept of the Goddess. The Goddesses are not believed to have outer existence except in *Mantra* and *Yantra* form. But the only exception to this *Tāntric* idea is the case of the ten *Mahāvidyā Goddesses* who were brought in relation to this *Dakṣayajña* legend as a concession to be followers of the *Purāṇas*. The great *Goddess Kāli* or *Mahāmāyā* has innumberable forms some of which are distributed in different *āmnāyas* or regions. The better known are the *Mahāvidyā* Goddesses : *Kāli, Tārā. Chinnamastakā Sundarī, Bagalā, Mātaṅgī, Lakṣmī, (Śyāmalā?) Siddhavidyā-Bhairavi and Dhūmāvatī (Śaktisaṅgamatantra, Tārākhaṇḍa). Sāktānanadataraṅgiṇi* quotes another list as *Kāli, Tārā, Māhādurgā, Tvaritā Chhinamastakā, Vāgvādinī, Annapūrṇā, Pratayṅgirā, Kāmākhyavāsinī, Bāla* and *Śilavasinī, Mātaṅgī*. Sometimes thirteen or more often eighteen *Mahāvidyā Goddesses* are also mentioned. They are *Kāli, Tārā, Chhinnā, Mātaṅgī, Bhuvaneśwarī, Annapūrṇā, Nityā, Mahiṣamardinī, Durgā, Tvaritā, Tripurā, Pūṭā, Bhariavī, Bagalā, Dhūmāvatī, Kamalā, Saraswatī, Jayadurgā and Tripurasundarī (Niruttaratantra, Paṭala* XV). In the *Nāradapañcarātra* it is stated that there are seven crore *Mahāvidyās* and seven crore *Upavidyās (Prāṇatoṣinī). Mahānirvāṇatantra* states that the great Goddess is of the nature of the infinite and it is only for the sake of her devotees that she connects herself with *Prakṛti*, characterised by three qualities, *Sattva, Rajas* and *Tamas* which is an integral part of her ownself and assumes the forms of *Mahāvidyās*. The primal *Vidyā* is *Kāli who is the bestower of direct liberation. The Goddess Tārā* is of *Sattva* quality and she is the bestower of knowledge. *Ṣodaṣi, Bhuvaneśwarī* and *Chhinnamastakā* are of *Rajas* quality and they bestow wordly things like wealth, heaven etc. *Dhūmāvati, Bagalā, Mātaṅgī* and *Kamalā* are of *Tamas* quality. They are invoked especially in connection with *Ṣaṭkarma* (*māraṇa, Uchhāṭana* etc.) and allied purposes.

Let us have a primary discussion about these *Mahāvidyā* Goddesses. *Kāli* is the abstraction of primal energy. *Śaktisaṅgamatantra* states that according to *Hādimata* Mahāśakti is called *Kāli* in Kerala. Tripurā in *Kashmir,* and Tārā in *Gauda*. According to Kāḍimātā she is called Tripurā in Kerala, Tāriṇī in Kashmir and Kāli in *Gauda*. Kāla or time devours the world during its dissolution. She even devours Kāla and that is why she is called Kāli and is conceived of as the primal cause of creation and destruction (Mahānirvāna). According to *Nirvāṇatantra* she is Brahman representing existence and consciousness and conceived of as with or without attributes. This *tantra* says that all the Gods have their origin and dissolution in *Kāli*. The *Bījamantra* of *Kāli* is *Kṛīm* letters K.R.I.M. being suggestive of *Dharma, Artha, Kāma* and *Mokṣa* respectively. *Todalatantra* and *Purascaryārṇava* interpretes *K* as the creative aspect of Goddess, *R* the destructive *I* the sustaining and *M* the quilibrium of *Śiva-Sakti*. In principle *Kāli* is one and there can be another part from her.

But, according to the capability and desire of the worshipper she may be conceived of in innumerable forms like *Dakṣinā, Siddhā, Guhyā, Śrī, Bhadrā, Cāmuṇḍā, Savāsanā* and *Mahākāli*. The *Māhakālasaṃhita* gives nine names - *Dakṣiṇā, Bhadra, Smaśānakāli, Guhyā, Kāmakalā, Dhanā Siddhi* and

Chaṇḍikā. The *Jayadrathayāmala* mentions *Kālikāḍambarā, Rakṣā, Indivarā, Daṇḍā, Ramaṇī, Īśānā. Jīva, vīryā, Prajñā* and *Saptārṇā*. The *Śaktisaṅgamatantra* mentions *Haṁsa* and *Vaśīkaraṇa* form of Kāli. Of these forms *Dakṣinakāli* or *Śyāmā* is the most important. In her Dhyāna as quoted in the *Tantrasāra,* she is described as having a terrible appearance, a fierce face, having four hands, united hair, and a garland of severed heads around the neck. In her lower and upper left hands she holds a freshly severed head and a sword, and in the lower and upper right hands she exhibits *Abhaya* and *Varada* poses. Naked, dark as dense cloud in complexion, her body is streamed with blood which oozes from the garland of severed heads she wears. Two corpses serve as her earrings. Terrible in face and teeth, she has well-developed breasts probably to demostrate her uncommon beauty, her girdle is made of hands cut off from the bodies of corpses. Her face is smiling but it is stained with blood falling from both corners of her mouth. She lives at the cremation ground. She has three eyes resembling the orb of the rising sun. Her united hair hand to the right. She stands on the chest of Śiva lying as corpse. She is engaged in *Viparītarati* or *Puruṣāyita* with *Mahākāla (Niruttaratantra) Śmaśānakāli or Śiva* resembles *Dakṣināṅkāli* engaged in *Viparītarati* with *Mahākāla*. *Tantrasāra* describes this deity with a sacred thread of snake, surrounded by Jackals and *Yoginīs* and intoxicated due to heavy driking. *Śyāmārahasya* and *Prāṇatosiṇī* also described this deity in greater detail. *Siddhakāli* is also a form of *Dakṣināṅkāli*. She is three eyed and has also dishevelled hair. She drinks *Amṛta* from a skull in her left hand. She wears a gridle and a jeweled crown. Her complexion is the colour of deep blue lotus. She has a flaming tongue. The Sun and Moon are her earrings. She stands in *Āliḍha* posture (*Kālitantra*). *Guhyakāli* is of the colour of clouds. *Tantrasāra* describes this deity with black garments, a rolling tongue, terribly looking teeth, sunken eyes, smiling face, necklaces made of serpents and a crescent on the head. She frequently licks a corpse. Her sacred thread is a snake and she has the thousand-headed *Ananta* on her head. *Śiva* stands as a child to her left. According to *Mahākālasaṃhiā Guhyakāli* has ten faces. At times this goddess has been described as having 1,2,3,5,10,20,30,36,60,80 and 100 faces. *Bhadrakāli* has been described in *Tantrasāra* as a hungry goddess ready to devour everything. Her eyes are sunken, face black as ink, hair dishevelled, and teeth blue-black like the *jambu* fruit. She holds a terrible and flame-like noose in both hands. She is three-eyed and four-armed. Her hands hold a *Kapāla, Paraśu, Damaru* and *Triṇūla*. *Yoginītantra* holds *Bhadrakāli* to be *Mahiṣamardinī*. *Tantrasāra* describes *Mahākāli* known as *Mahāraudrī* and *Kātyāyani* having five faces, each containing three eyes and in her left hands she holds a spear and trident, a bow and arrow, as sword and shield and exhibits *Vara* and *Abhaya* poses. *Merutantra* conform to this description. She is also having ten-faced form (*Purascaryrṇava*). *Rakṣākāli* is variously depicted as of white complexion, three faces, six arms, nine eyes and matted locks of hair. Her garment is red. She is generally invoked as a protectress from calamities. *Cāmuṇḍakāli* is decribed in the *Tantrasāra* as having a pleasant face but a terrible apperance with fearful teeth. She has a *Khatvāṅga* and a sword in the two right hands and a noose and a human head in two right hands. She wears a tiger skin like *Tārā* and sits on a corpse. She is described to live in dense darkness.

Tārā, the Buddhist *Tāntric* Goddess has been equated with *Kāli*. *Saktisaṅgamatantra* equates *Kāli, Tārā, Tripurāsundarī* and *Chhinnamastakā* are one and the same. *Tantrasāra's* description of the Goddess confirms to its Buddhist character which shows it as a youthful, fierce, shortstatured and beig-bellied goodess. She stands in *pratyālīḍha* pose and wears a garland of skull and a lotus in the left. As a *Mahāvidyā* goddess her head has not been adorned by the *Dhyāni-Buddha-Akṣobhya* as found in its *Buddhist* form (*Nalatantra*). *Purascaryārṇava* describes her as *Tāriṇī*. According to *Matsyasūkta* as quoted in *Tantrasāra,* the cult of *Tārā* is not only conducive to liberation but it also bestows knowledge, poetic ability, wealth, success in business and position in the royal court. Of the different forms of *Tārā, Ekajātā* is worthwhile mentioning. Her matted locked are considered to be formed out the *Rudra* himself (*Tārārahasya*). *Tantrasāra* describes *Ugratārā* another variety of the goddess as standing in *Pratyālāḍha* pose with her right foot on a corpse. She holds a sword, blue lotus, knife and vessel in her hands. She is short statured wth brown matted locks and fierece snakes on her body. She destroys the activities of the whole world having put it in a skull-cup. The third form of *Tārā* is known as *Nīlasaraswatī*. This goddess is said to have originated in a lake called *Cola* to the west of mounts *Meru*. Whiel she was performing austerities her energy fell into the lake and this caused her complexion to become blue. *Aṣtatārā* forms are also conceived like Buddhist *Aṣṭamahābhaytārā*. They are known as *Tārā, Ugrā Vajrā, Mahogrā, Kālī, Saraswatī, Kāmeśwarī* and *Bhadrakālīk*.

Ṣoḍaśī is a goddess of the *Mahāvidyā* category who is also known as *Śrividyā-tripurā* or *Tripurasundarī*. This goddess is a *Tātric* abstraction like *Trikoṇā, Triśaktī (Iccā, Jñāna, Kryā) Tribindu (Rakta, Śukla, Miśra) Tripīṭha (Kāmarūpa,* and *Jālandhara) Triliṅga (Vāṇa, Itara, Para) as per descriptions in Kāmaka-āvilāsa. This goddess is also known as Lalitā* in whose favour *dhyānas* of one thousand names (*Lalitāsahasranāma*) and three thousand names (*Lalitātriśatī*) are to be practised. *Yoginī-hṛdaya* describes her as a very beautiful and youthful goddess installed on a red lotus her garment being also red. *Mahākālasaṁhitā* also prescribes her *dhyāna*. Her nature is very benign.

Bhuvaneśwarī is conceived of as the Goddess who protects the world. She dazzles like the rising sun having the moon on her chest. *Purascaryārṇava* describes her as a goddess of three eyes, highly developed breats and similing face. She holds a goad and a noose in two hands showing *Varadā* and *Abhayā* poses with the other two.

Bhairavī is the goddess who saves her worshipper from all types of sorrows. According to *Paraśurāma-kalpasutra* her name is formed by the letters *Bha* symbolising *bharaṇa* or maintenance, *ra* symbolising *Ramaṇa* or sport like creation and *Va* menas *Vaman* or release. Thus this goddess represents the *Śakti* or creation, maintenance and release or dissolution unlike three different god heads Brahman, *Viṣṇu* and Maheśwarea having only one power, either creation or maintenance or release. She has many forms like *Tripurabhairavī* who resembles a thousand rising suns, her eyes resembling red lotus and her be jewelled crown the lusture of the crescent moon. Her garment is red, she has garland of heads round her neck, her breasts are covered with blood. She holds a rosary and manuscript in two hands showing *Varadā* and *Abhayā* poses in other two as has been described in *Fetkāriṇitantra*. The *Caitanyabhairavī* holds a noose, a goad, and also a skull in her left hjand. *Bhubaneśwari* or *Bhairavī*, is benign, clad in red garments, and decked with a variety of ornaments. She is having three eyes, highly developed breasts, two hands holding a noose and a goad of the other two showing *Varada* and *Abhaỳa* postueres. *Sampatpradābhairavī* is a youthful goddess having an erotci figure : she shows *Varadā* and *abhayā* poses and carries a rosary and a manuscripts in her hands, *Satkūṭabhairavī* takes the hue of a rising sun, her necklaces are of severed human heads, her breasts are developed and look like goden jars. She holds in her four hands noose, goad, manuscript and rosary. *Rudrabhairvai* wears a garland of severed heads from which blood ozzes. She used *Śiva* as her throne and holds in her ten hands the trident, kettle drun, sword, shield, bow, arrow, noose, goad, manuscript and rosary, *Annapūrṇābhairvī* also known as *Nityā* is the distributor of food. She has *Bhūmi* and Śrī beside her. She wears a crescent on her head-a crown sparkling with the lustre of nine kinds of gems and wasteband, as per description in the *Tantrasāra*.

Chainnamastakā or *Pracaṇḍacaḍṇikā* is like a *Kalpavṛkṣa* and can fulfil any want of an aspirant. The *Tantrasāra* describes her numerous *dhyānas*. In fact this goddess is imagined as a half open white lotus on the navel with the red orb of the Sun in its pericarp. This *orb* is identified with the *yoni* trianle. The Goddess *Chhinnamastakā* is contemplated in this way holding her own severed head in her left hand and drinking the blood flowing from her severed throat with her dreadful tongue. Her hair is dishevelled, she holds a skull vessel in the left hand and a knife in the right. Fierce and naked, she stands in *Pratyālīḍha* pose on *Rati* and *Kāma* who are engaged in inverted sexual intercourse. She looks like a girl of sixteen having highly developed breasts. *Ḍākini* stands to her left and *Varṇinī* to her right, both of them drinking the blood which flows from her severed throat. *Ḍākini* is full of effulgence having matted locks, three eyes, white teeth, developed breats, dishevelled hair, skull vessel in her left hand and knife in the right. *Varṇini* is of red complexion and has none of the emblems of the former. *Chinnamastakā* is just like *Buddhist Vajrayoginī*.

The goddess *Dhūmāvatī* is capable of destroying enemies. She is described as *Vivarṇā*, *Cañcalā* and *Rusṭā*. She is rough, her robes are unclean and hair united. She appears like a widow having only a few teeth. Her charriot has a crow banner and a crow drags it. She is tall and has hanging breast, looking eyes and big nose. She holds a winnowing fan in one hand and shows *Varadā* pose in the other which is trembling. She appears hungry and thirsty, terrifying and quarrelsome as has been described in *Fetkārṇitantra*. The *Nārada Pancarātra* equates *Bagalāmukhi* with *Dūmāvatī*, but *Dhūmāvatī* appears like an old widow while *Bagalāmukhī* is youthful and has a golden complexion. She is also not qurrelsome and insatiable like *Dhūmāvatī* but appears grave and drunk. According to *Tantrasāra Bagalā* has three eyes and four hands. She sits, in *Ardhaparyaṅkākāsanā* on a corpse and holds a club, a noose and a thunderbolt, and an enemy's tongue. She is clad in yellow clothes and has developed breast as has been described in *Purascaryārṇava*. She is also called *Viṣṇuvanitā* which gives her a clear character of a Vaiṣṇavī.

Mātaṅgī is three-eyed, dark-complexioned and seated on a bejewelled throne. On her four hands she holds a sword, shield, noose and goad. Her head is adorned by the moon. Various forms of Mātangi are known such as *Ucchiṣṭa-māṭṅgi, Rāja-mātaṅgī*. *Ucchista-mātaṅgī*, also known as *Ucchista-caṇḍālinī* is conceived of as wearing black robes. Her feet are graced with red slip or wash. She has developed breasts, garlands of pearls and corlas around her neck and earrings made of conch. *Sumukhī- mātaṅgī*, sits on a corpse. She has red robes and ornaments and is a youthful maiden of sixteen with highly developed breasts. Her left hand holds a skull and the right hand a chopper. The *Vedhā-kālī* image at *Puri Jagannātah Temple* closely resembles this description. *Rāja-mātaṅgi* is conceived of as residing within a triangle inside the pericarp of a lotus. She has a smiling face which is bright because of milk perspiration. The region below her navel is marked by *trivali* under which is shown the pubic hair. She is clad in beautiful robes and decked with ornaments of pearls. She is two-armed and fickle-eyed owing to her drunken condition. She is a maiden of sixteen with big, round, firm breasts. Śuka and Sārika are her companions. She seems to be the embodiment of the sixty-four arts.

The Goddess *Kamalā* also known as *Lakṣmī* and *Śri*, has the complexion of gold. She is bathed by four white elephants which hold golden jars of nectar in their upraised trunks. She herself holds two lotuses in her two upper hands and shows *Varadā* and *Abhaya* poses with her two lower hands. She is seated or standing off a lotus. She wears a crown sparkling with gems and silken clothes as described in *Sāradātilakam*, one of her forms is *Mahālakṣmī* who is a very youthful goddess, bedecked with all sorts of ornaments and select flowers and clad in the best of robes. Her physical features and figure are perfect; they radiate the highest degree of eroticism. *Sāmrājya-lakṣmī* is also a form of *Kamalā*. Her complexion is like that the *atasi* flower. She is adorned with ornaments made of pearls. She has eight hands holding a conch, wheet, club, lotus, bow and arrow, showing *Varadā* and *abhayā* poses. Each of these goddesses has a *Bhairava* of her own, *Bhairava* of Kāli is *Mahākāla*, of Tripurāsundarī Laliteśvara, of Tārā Akṣobhya, *Chhinnamastakā Vikarāla, of Bhuvaeswari Mahādeva, Dhūmāvati* Kālabhairava, of *Kamalā* Nārāyaṇa of *Bhairavi* Vaṭuka, of *Mātaṅgī* Sadāśiva and of *Bagalā, Mṛyuñjaya.* Of course there is no uniformity in the

Tantras regarding the names of the *Bhairavas* and their relation to the Goddesses. At times they are related to Vaiṣṇava Gods like *Viṣṇu, Acyuta etc. and at other times with Śiva, Ṣambhu, Maheswara, Dakināmūrti* etc. In this way it is made clear that the *Śakti-Tāntric* religion brought the *Vaiṣṇavite* and *Śaivite* gods to its fods, thereby synthesizing different religios cults into a unified cult of *Śaktupāsanā*.

The *Yuganaddha* principle of non-duality as obtaining in Buddhist *Tantras* also influenced the *Śakti Tantric* idols which have found expression in various *Śakti* icons. The idols were conceived from the idea of *bhoga* of the male partner with the devout and sensual female help-mate, the *Yakṣa* and *Yakṣiṇi* of the Jainas, the *Bhairava* and *Yoginī* of the *Vajrayāni* Buddhas. The initiating woman plays the part of *Śakti* while the male initiate assumes the part of *Śiva* and both attain together a realation of the imminence within theselves of the substantiality of the Goddess and the God. This idea has been criticised by N.N. Bhattacharya who associates temple icons of erotic nature with *Kāmaśāstra*. But the icons of 64 *Yoginīs* and conception of the 64 sexual postures illustrated by *Vatsyāyana* must be having a common origin and that is, the conception of *Śakti* worship by *Maithunatattva*. At best this may be thought of a symbolical representation of an event which a *sādhaka* thought that he could secure the actual occurrence of that event thereby pledging the goddess in *Yuganaddha* position. This explains the inconsistency of sexual and erotic reproduction of *Yuganaddha* ideas in the from of art in temples.

The temple art having a *garbha* inside which the god in the form of the chief idol is placed symbolically represents the *Śakti upāsanā* in the form *Maithuna* ultimately conceiving in the realison of the *God inside the womb.* This sexual design pertains to *West Asian temples* which are devided into three parts, i.e. the porch representing the lower end of eht *Vagina* upto the hymen, the hall or the *Vagina* itself on the inner sanctum of the *uterus*. Although we may not agree with Dr. Bhattacharya's view that the sexual depiction in the outer temple reveal the lusts of the aristocratic class. However the fact remains that the temple *upāsaā* was symbolic representation of the *Tāntric Maithuna Upāsanā*. The earlist depictions of *Maithuna* associated with *Śrī*, the Goddess of abundence is found in the 2nd Century B.C. Monuments of *Sānci* and *Bhārhut* and also in *Bodhagayā*. Although the earlist depiction belongs to the Buddhist period this become very popular and found a varied expression in the arts of Gāndhāra, *Mathurā*, *Westen Deccan* and the *Andhra region*. These portrayals of couples in varieties including kissing, embracing, pre-cohabital activities are available at Mathura, Nāgārjuṇa Koṇḍā and even in a number of temples in Orissa where the chief idol is Śiva, Devi or even Viṣṇu or Sūrya. The temples constructed between 400 A.D. to 13th century A.D. also have in their walls numerous specimens depicting sexual activities which may be associated with the *Tāntric* rituals. These *motif* at times depict the various *Kāmśāstriya* poses of actual *Maithuna*. According to Dr. Bhattacharya from 900 A.D. onwards there is really an outburst of erotic expression-bold, frank, and gross with countless varieties of copulative acrobatics on the exteriors and interiors of religious buildings. These are abundantly found in the temples of Purī and Koṇārk and in the Khajurāho art groups. There is dispute regarding the opinion that these exhibitions of erotficism in temple walls are sexo-*yogic* as has been discussed by Mulakaraj Ananda in *Kāmakalā*, A.Danielon in *Approach to Hindu erotic sculpture* and K.Lal, in the *Cult of Desire*. Although some of these authors opine these sex techniques are belonging to *Haṭhayaga* but this has been objected to by Dr. Bhattacharya. According to him these *tāntric* glimpses do not prove an obvious link between the erotic depiction on temples and *tantrism*. If there be any clue in *tāntric-art*, it should be functionally related to *upāsanā* and *Sādhanā* to attain the bliss of non-duality. But Dr. Bhattacharya has not clarified as to what those art may be. His objection that the original *Śāktapiṭhas* are not associated with any sexual display because of its esoteric nature does not appear to be conclusive. Because the *Yugangddha* positions are directly related to *Pancamakāropāsanā* in the *Tāntric Vīrasādhanā*. And before this *Śāktopāsanā* there was already the *Śākta-pāśupata Upāsanā* in the form of the *phallus* placed on a *Yoni* known as *Śivaliṅga* So there could not have been any social reacion to erotic displays on the temple walls when these were conceived as part of the *Upāsanātantra*.

But the Upāsanā of *Mahāvidyā* Goddesses shows a clear diversion from such ugly depiction in worship of images. The popular icon of *Dakṣinakāli* is worshipped with a full image standing on Śiva. Even the original image of these deities do not show their naked form. In iconographic descriptions the *Kalī* is having four hands in two of which the holds a skull and a aword and the other two exhibit *Varadā* and *abhayā* pases. She has dishevelled hair and a lolling tongue pressed by her teeth. Although in some of the images *Siva* is depicted to lie on the ground with his *Penis* erected and the goddess in seated neked on him having taken his penis into her sex organ, this is not a common feature. The *Chola* and *Pallava* art have also some bearing on the *tātric* conception of *Chhinnamastakā*. *Tāntric Mahālakṣmī* is represented in an eighteen-armed image at Jājpur in the facade of the *Trilocana* Temple. A twenty armed *Mahālakṣmi* image of 10th century is found in *Simila* in *Rājasāhi District*. The *Tāntric* goddess *Ekānansā* which is of ten equated with *Kamakalātmikā* of the *Mahāvidyā* pantheon is worshipped as the principal deity in the *Ananta Vāsudeva Temple* of Bhubaneshwar with *Kṛṣṇa* and *Balarām* on either side of her. A sculpture at Bikrampur in West Bengal shows the figure of a four-armed goddess which may stand for *Mahāmayā* or *Tripurabhāiravī*. A *caṇḍi* image from Dalbazar in Dacca is of ten identified with *tāntric* Bhubaneswari. A six-armed goddess also identified with Bhubaneśwari is found at *Shekati* in Jessore District. Similar four armed Bhubaneswari icon is found at Puri in Jagannāth Temple. On the images like *Sarvāṇi, Sarvamaṅgalā and Aparājitā* of *tāntric* cult belonging to the *Pāla-sena* period are found in different parts of Bengal. In Māldah museum a *Ṣaḍkṣarī Mahāvidya* image in also found. In Decca museum two stone images of Avalokiteśwara and and image of Tārā is also found. In sculptural representation *Avalokiteśwara* is of ten .flanked by goddess Tārā. Of course we cannot accept this *Tārā* to be of *Mahāvidyā* Pantheon. The depiction of *Vajrayoginī* found in *Sāranātha* museum appears to be a stone image of *Chhinnamastā*. A Patna museum image shows the deity standing in *Ālīḍha* posture holding *Karti*, *Kapāla* and *Khavāṇga*. The image of *Jamvāla* with pot-bellied form available at Ratnagiri. *Ayodhaya* and *Prācī* Valley of Orissa pre-supposes *Kāmalātmikā* form having corn in one of the hands sitting in *lalitāsana* form with feet rested on a lotus or on a *Kalasa*.

It is interesting to find the *Trailokyavijaya* images in *Nālandā* having four arms and trampling on prostrait figure of Śiva. Collection in Patna museum shows the God trampling upon in the head of *Śiva* with his left leg and the body of Gouri with right. The *Bānpur* bronze image also shows trampled *Śiva* in eight hands and Gouri with four hands lying flat in her back and the God's foot presses down in the bosom. The man figure is in *Pratyalīḍha* pose. Although these images are of Buddhist character but they pre-suppose the *Mahāvidyā* images where *Devi* is found trampling *Śiva* under her feet in *Pratyālīḍha* pose. From *Ratnagiri* in Orissa the images of *Āropyatārā* in *Ardhaparyṇkāsana* and *Aṣṭamahābhayatārā* are found. Most of the images of *Tārā* goddess are found seated on a lorus, right hand exhibiting *Varadā* pose and left hand holding a steam of lotus. The *Elora* speciman shows *abhaya* pose of this goddess. Bronze images of *Shyāmā-tārā* group are found in Patna Museum. The eleven *Tārā* images in bronze all in lalitāsana corrying *Utpala* in the left hand

and exhibiting *Varadā* pose in the right are found at Bānpur. An 8th Cantury standing bronze image of *Dhanadātārā* exhibiting *abhaya* pose rosary, lotus stalk and Manuscript is found in *Nālandā* museum. A bronze image of *Vajratārā* shown within an 8 petalled lotus with the figures of 8 attendents carved the inside of the petals is found in Dacca museum. Although these representations are mostly Buddhist in character they must have presumed the *śakti-Tāntric* images of the *Mahāvidyās*.

Most of these *Mahāvidyā* goddesses are mentioned in the *Śritattvanidhi* with their iconographic features. *Kāli*, the *ādyā Mahāvidyā* has been described in the *Kāli tantra* as the goddess of four hands in two hands she has a sword, and a head, the other two hands showing *abhaya* and *Varadā vidyā*. Her terrific features with dreadful teeth have body as black as cloud, although her face is copper red, her hands holding a head and a *corṇikā* flower. But according to *Śrītattvanidhi* the iconographic features of this deity has been described as having eight hands showing there in a conch, a disc, a mace, a pot, a pestle, an elephant goad, a noose and a thunder bolt. Her colour resembles that of a cloud. Her posture shows her in a state of eternal bliss playing in the bosom of *Śiva*. This also conforms to her descriptions in the *yoginīhṛdaya*. The second in the pantheon of *Mahāvidyā* i.e. *Tārā* who is the source of light also represents the *sower of hunger as has been shown in Yoginīhṛdaya*. The *Devīsahasranāma* explains her name as one who leads to the other shore (*taratyanayā sā Tārā*). The *Bhagavatītantra* shows her as a hungry goddess. According to *Jaina iconography* *she is described as seated on a lotus, holding in her four hands a citrus,* two lotuses and a rosary. With this form she is mentioned as *Dhāriṇī, yaksiṇī* in the Jaina scriptures. The *Digambara Jainas* have conceived her as Goddess riding on a swan and holding a snake, *a vajra,* a *mṛga* in the three of her hands. The fourth hand is in *Varadā* posture. The *Sādhanamālā* described number of *Tārās* emaneting from *Amoghasiddhi*. But *Śrītattvanidhi* describes her as of short-stature and dressed in tiger skin. She wears a garland of skulls, her tongue is protruded, she is having three eyes. According to *prāṇatosiṇī* she is described as *Ugratārā* because she is an *Ugra* goddess and also protects her devotees from all fierceness. She is of *Sindhūra* colour. She sits in *Pratyālīḍha* pose and holds a sword, a spear and a *Kharpara*. In the remaining hand she shows the *Varadā* gesture.

But *Śrītattvanidhi* does not describe *Chhinnamastakā* icon. Instead *Ṣodasī* has been mentioned as the third *Mahāvidyā* how has been identified with *Tripura-sundarī*, She is described as having four arms holding a noose, an elephant goad, an arrow, and a bow as per *Ṣodasītantra*. But *Śrītattvanidhi* describes this goddess having four hands and of *Vermillion* colour. She holds a noose, a goad, an *ikṣudaṇḍa*, bow and flower-arrow like the *purāṇic Kāmadevī-rati*. The iconographic fetures identifies her with *Rājarājeśwarī* standing in the orbit of sun (*bhānumaṇḍala madhyasthā*). The *Sāradā Tilakam* describes her as a goddess of *Rakta-varṇā* and bright like a thousand Sun. She has four hands holding a book, a rosary and two hands showing *Varadā* and *Abhaya* postures. This goddesss is also known as *Bālasundarī* or *Kulasundarī*. *Śrītattvanidhi* describes her icon as of red colour like that of the rising Sun having adorned her head with crescent diadem. She has three eyes and a smiling face. In her hands adorns the same thing as shown in *Sāradātilakam*. The fourth goddess *Bhuvaneśwarī* is conceived as the deity of the spheres; her colour is red like that of the rising Sun. She has crescent on her crown and adorns herself with *kuṇḍala, hāra, graiveyaka kānci, Maṇi, Valaya* etc. She sits on the lotus throne and has three eyes. Her two hands showing the *abhaya and the Varadā* gestures and the remaining two holding noose and a goad. But the *Bhuvaneśwarī tantra* depicts the goddess in the same way as in the *Śrītattvanidhi*. The author of *South-Indian images of Gods and Goddesses* describes Bhubaneśwarī as the deity haivng a serpent on her head coiled round a liṅga stuck into a *yoni* and in her four hands holding a cup, a mace, a shield, and the *Śrīphala*. Her colour is like the melten gold. The *Śāradātilakam'* describes two other forms of *Bhubaneśwarī* namely *soubhāgyabhubaneśwarī* and *Māyābhubaneśwarī*. The former is of the vermillion colour and has three eyes and round breasts. Her person is adorned with various jewels, her hands showing a cup and a red lotus. *Māyā Bhubaneśwarī* is of blue colour, having a crescent in her head, she has got three eyes and four hands, she holds a cup, a lotus, showing *abhaya* pose in another hand. Nothing has been said about the fourth hand. *Chhinnamastakā* a popular *Tāntric* goddess is described below as in *Chhinnamastakā Tantra*. Her left foot in *Pratyālīḍha* pose she holds her severed head and a knife. Naked she drinks voluptuously the stream of the blood nectar flowing from her beheaded body. She has three eyes with a serpent on her forehead with jewels. Her breasts are adorned with lotuses. Inclined towards bust she sits erect above the *God of love* who shows shines of lustfulness. She looks like a red rose, but her eyes are blue. As has been discussed earlier this deity may be compared with *Vajrayoginī*, the stream of blood issuing from her severed body is falling into the mouth of the severed head and into the mouths of the *yoginī* called *Vajravairocanī* and *Vajravarṇinī* on either side of her.

Bhairavī is the sixth deity of the *Mahāvidyā* pantheon. She is fearful having the power of death and is engaged in perpetual destruction. She is also called *Tripurābhairavī*, the fearful goddess of the *Tribhairvī*, viz., *swarga*, *martya* and *pātāla*. The *Śrītattvanidhi* describes the iconography of *Tripurabhairavī tantra* describes this deity with a slight difference from *śrsītattvacanidhi* asunder.

Śrītattvanidhi depicts Tripurabhairavī sitting on a lotus throne shining with a crimson glow incomparable as of thousand *sūryas*. She wears a silken veil and garland of skulls, blood streams from breasts. She has lotus-like face with three eyes and a crescent over her head. The hand shows gesture of victory, of wisdom *Varadā and abhaya* poses. The colour of deity is described red. *Saṁvittripura* is a peaceful goddess having three eyes of white colour. She holds a book, a rosary, a pot full of *ambrosia* and the remaining hand in the *Vyākhyāna* pose.

The seventh of list of *Mahāvidyā* is *Dhūmāvatī*, the Goddess of Poverty and misfortune. It is contemplated that the world goes into smoke at the time of ultimate destruction and *Dhūmāvatī* signifies that idea. Her visage can be seen the destitute, the beggers, the lepers, the diseased. She dwells in the wounds of the earth; in desert, in ruined houses, tatters, hunger thirst, widowhood, quarrels, the mourning of children. Her icons have been conceived in *BhāratīyapratīkaVidyā*. The *Dhūmāvatītantra* describes her as a female goddess of unhealthy complexion, restless, wicked, tall, with a dirty robe and dishevelled hair. Her gaped mouth bereft of teeth gives her a widow look, ferocious holding in her hand a winnowing basket. Her eyes appear cruel, hands trembling, nose too long. She behaves deceitfully. She is shy in her appearance and inspires fear and instigate quarrels. She is treated as *Kālarātri*. The *Śrītattvanidhi* describes her to be surrounded by a band *Pisācās* and of red complexion, wearing red garments. Her teeth are protruded and fearful. She wears the *kuṇḍalas* in her ears and *muṇḍamālā as garland, laughs loudly having heald a three-eyed goddess with a Bālaśaśi* on her head.

Now we come to *Bagalā*, the eighth goddess in the *Mahāvidyā* pantheon. *Śritattvanidhi* describes her of yellow complexion, three-eyed and four-handed. In her hands there is trident, a *pānapātra*, a mace and the tonge of the enemy. She has the most fearful and the same time beautiful features with red lips, swelling breasts, and swanlike neck. She sits on a lotus throne. According to *Bagalāmukhītantra* she has only tow h ands, the left holding the tongue of the enemy and the right torturing him by a mace. It also describes her clad in yellow robes.

The ninth goddess of *Mahāvidyā* pantheon is *Mātangī,* who is the goddess of royalty and domination. She is conceived of as the goddess who established peace, calm and prosperity after defeating the demon of disorderliness. The *Mātangītantra* describes her of dark complexion with a white crescent in her garland. Her three eyes are lotus like. She sits resplendent with a jewelled throne. In her four hands she holds a noose, a sword, s shield and a goad. But *Śrītattvanidhi does* not confirm, this description. It describes the goddess as *Rājamātangī* of black complextion sitting upon a *ratnaparyanka*. Her one leg dangles down and placed on a placed on a lotus the other being on the throne itself. In one hand *she* holds a *Vīṇa* and in the other *mālā*. There is a crescent moon on her head. She is shown listening the talks of a parrot which is at her side. Her garments are of red colour and her forehead is adorned with *tilaka*.

The 10th and the last *Mahāvidyā* is *Kamalāmikā* in other-words the goddess who is *Kamalā* or *Lakṣmī* at heart. In the *Kamalātantra* she is described as of golden complexion bathed in the streams of *Ambrosia* glowing from golden vessels held by the trunks of four white elephants. Here hands grant boons and allay fears that is *Varadā* and *abhayā* poses, and in two other hands she holds two lotuses. She has a brilliant diadem over her head. Her hips like ripe fruits are loosely draped in a silken garment. The *Śrītattvanidhi* describes her in eight different forms namely *Lakṣmī, Gajalakṣmī, Mahālakṣmī, Śri, Vīralakṣmī* two armed *Vīralakṣmī,* eight armed *Vīralakṣmī* and *Prasannalakṣmī*. The goddess *lakṣmī* while represented also with Viṣṇu is shown only with two hands holding the lotus flowers. She is *hemavarṇā*. In *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa* she is represented with four hands holding a lotus with a long-stalk, a pot full of *ambrosia*, a *Bilva* fruit and a *conch*. *Śrītattvanidhi* describes *Gajalakṣmī* as a deity in white garments and having four hands. She sits in the *Padmāsana* pose on an eight petal lotus which itself is on a *simhāsana*. In one of the right hands she holds a long lotus stalk, and in the left an *amṛtaghaṭa*. In the remaining two hands she holds a *Bilva* fruit and a conch. Two elephant standing beside her are emptying, the vessels held in their trunk over the heads of the goddess. She is also adorned with a beautiful lotus on her head. The *Mahālakṣmī* has been described as a goddes of golden colour having four hands, the lower right hand holds a vessel and the upper right hand holds a mace, called *Kaumodakī*. The upper left hand shows *kheṭaka* and the lower holds *Śrīphala*. There is also an emblem of *Liṅga* over her head. The *Srīlakṣmī* is of golden complexion. She is described as the unviersal mother decked with various ornaments and a *Mukuṭa*. She holds in her two upper hands two lotus flowers and other two showing boon conferring and fear allying. The *Pañcarātra* worshippers mostly adore *Vīralakṣmī* who sists on lotus throne being *Suvarṇavarṇā*. Her two hands show *Varadā* and *abhaya* poses, the other two hands holding lotuses. Some of the *Vīralakṣmī* forms are eight-handed showing a noose, a goad a rosary, a mace, a lotus, a pot, the other two hands showing *Varadā* and *abhaya* poses.

Śrītattvanidhi also describes the *Prasannalakṣmī* forms who is considered as the primordal energy, the other of all being occupying the left of *Viṇu*. She is also conceived as *Annapūrṇā* a two-handed goddess with red complexion and red eyes. Her breasts are high and face is round like a fullmoon. In her left hand she carries a vessel set with rubies and containing in it honey. In the right hand she has a spoon set with rubies containing milky, sweety, delicious rice, i.e. *pāyasa*. The images of *Śrīdevi* is found in *Indian Art* since 2nd century B.C. It appears that even long before the *Mahāvidyā Upāsanā,* this goddess has been continuing its popularity right from the *vedic* age, and was therefore included in one of the ten aspects of the *Mahāvidyā*.

● ● ●

CHAPTER-VIII

The Tantras and the concept of Kālī

Kālī is one of the principle manifestations of *Śakti* and the first of the ten *Mahāvidyās*. The Tantras and the cult of *Kālī* form a very important link in the development of the Religious and the Philosophical thought of India.

Generally speaking, the *Tantra* comprises that class of the Scriptures of the *Hindus*, which contains the religious and philosophical teachings of Lord *Śiva* and his Consort, Goddess *Pārvatī*, for the realisation of the Great Divine Power, hidden in man. It is rather a practical exposition and application of the teachings of the *Upaniṣads* though varying according to its different schools. It prescribes the ways and means by which happiness, and the quest of mankind, may be obtained. It teaches, how man, by the worship of *Him* in the form of *Divine Power* (*śakti*), and by the practice of the discipline precribed for this purpose, may attain divinity and salvation. Its Key-note is - *Practise and you will be convinced*. Just as the test of a medicine is that it cures, so the test of the *Tantra* is that it gives superhuman power.

The *Tāntrika* religion is open to all; it is accessible not only to the higher strata of society, but also to the lower ones including woman. It is attainable by all persons without any distinction of caste and creed; and so, it may rather be awarded as an all-embracing *Universal* religion. It is said in the *Tantras* that all the bipeds from the *Brāhmaṇas* down to the most degraded, living on the surface of the earth, are competent (*Adhikārin*) to embrace the *Kaulācāra*[1] of the *Tantras* :

A *Kaula* spiritual teacher, who it is remarked in the *Tantra*, neglects to convert even a *Caṇḍāla*, a *yavana*, a degraded one, and a woman to the *Kaulācāra*, is a wretch and goes down to hell:

This spirit of conversion from one religion, or one form of religion to another, is seldom found encouraged in the *Vaidika* and the *Paurāṇika* faith. At least no religious merit is mentioned as being earned by converting man from one form of religion to another. But in the *Tāntras* it is said that one who can convert even a single man to the *Kaulācā*ra faith will earn very great religious merit :

The *Tantra*, like the *Yoga-vasiṣṭha*, *Rāmāyaṇa*, teaches how to enjoy without attachment and how to obtain salvation in the midst of enjoyments. An aspirant (*Sādhaka*) of the *Tāntrika*-religion should, first of all, raise himself to the level of divinity. If he can not do so, he is not expected to approach and worship a *Divine Being* :

The doctrines and dogmas of the *Tantras* appear, in some form or the other, in almost all the ancient and modern religions of the world.

---

[1] The *Tantra* describes seven paths (*Ācāras* or *Mārgas*) for the realisation of its goal. They are-*Vaidika, Vaiṣṇava, Śaiva, Dakṣiṇa, Siddhānta, Vāma and Kaula*. The *Kaulācāra* is said to be the highest and the noblest of all.

The mystic syllables or formulas (*Bīja-Mantras*) of the *Tantras* are found in the *Vaidika, Paurāṇika* and many other religions in India and elsewhere.

It is remarked by the *Tāntrika*-seers that though the language of the *Tantras* is not difficult, yet, there is no subject which is more difficult than this, for, it is properly understood by practice alone through the help of a competent spiritual teacher (*Guru*), and not by mere academic explanations of its texts. Only a real *Guru* can unveil its mystery by giving its experimental, psychical and religio-philosophical expositions.[1]

The *Tāntrika* religion has five principal schools - *Śākta, Śaiva, Vaiśṇava, Saura* and *Gāṇapatya*. The *Śākta* School deals with the worship and realisation of *Śakti* or Divine Power conceived as a Female Deity (*Devī*) and the *Great Mother* (*Jagaj-Jananī*). Whenever *Dharma* (Law and Order) suffers, whenever the good, the righteous and the heavenly beings are tortured, tormented and oppressed by the wicked demons, *Śakti* or Mother Goddess, appears in person in the world, kills the demons and restores Law and Order in the world:

But it is significant that no hymn is directly addressed to *Kālī* in the *Vedas*. Nevertheless, she resembles, in many respects, the Thunder God, *Indra;* the god of night, *Varuṇa;* the goddess of Night, *Rātrī;* and also *Vāk* of the *Vāksūkta* or Devī-sūkta of the *Ṛgveda. She has also close similitude with Goddess Rātrī*[2] or *Durgā*, of the *Khila* hymn of the *Ṛgveda.* Her resemblance with *Umā* of the

---

1. Mahānirvāṇatantra, XIV, 184.
2. *Ibid.*, XIV, 187.

Kenopaniṣad, too, cannot be denied. In the *Muṅḍakopaniṣad* (1, 2, 5), she appears as *Kālī Devī,* representing one of the seven tongues or flames of Fire. The *Kālikopaniṣad* said to belong to the *Saubhāgyakāṇḍa* of the *Atharvaveda,* however, deals with some aspects of the worship of *Kālī*[1] and identifies her with the Supreme Soul:

It may not be out of place to note here that the battle of *Kālī, Durgā* and other *Śaktis* with the Demons described in the *Tantras* and the *Purāṇas,* may be regarded as one of the representations of the allegorical battle[2] of the gods with the Demons depicted in the *Ṛgveda,* and understood and explained differently even by the old sages.

It may also be noted that the *Durgā*-prayers of the *Mahābhārata*[3] and the *Purāṇas,* including in particular the well known *Sapta-Śatī* of the *Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa,* and the *Tantras* clearly indicate that *Kālī* and *Durgā,* who is also called *Kālī, Mahākālī, Maṅgalakālī* and *Bhadrakālī,* are not different deities. They, in reality represent different aspects of one and the same Supreme Divine Power.

The Atharvaveda[4] (195-4) says that no other higher *power* than time (*Kāla*) exists. Goddess *Kālī* is none other than the symbol of the power of Time (*Kāla)* who is regarded as the destroyer of all. But just as ignition of fire is the very soul of fire, similarly *Kālī,* the power of *time,* is the very soul and essence of *Time*. Without her, *Kāla* becomes absolutely powerless. In fact, it is *Kālī*, and not *Kāla*, who destroys everything, including even Absolute Time (*Mahākāla*), when the dissolution of the Universe takes place :

---

[1] *Ibid.,* XIV, 188.

[2] *Gandharvatantra,* VIII, 1.

[3] *Sapta-śatī,* XI, 55

[4] *Mahānirvāṇatantra,* IV, 16.

Kālī is also called the Supreme Night (*Kālarātri*) and appears at the dead of night of the universal destruction. She creates the Universe again, when desire arises in her for the purpose. *Kālī* is dreadful in appearance and black in colour, with her tongue hanging out; she has four arms holding a Sword and a Cut-Head, granting boons and removing fear; she is naked and wears a garland of skull; she stands on a corpse (*Śava)* in the cremation ground :

It is very interesting to know that each of the different elements forming the image of *Kālī* is a symbol. Her arms, are indicative of her activities of destruction, creation and preservation - the Sword and the Cut-head standing for the first, and the Hands granting boons and removing fear for the remaining two respectively. Her dreadful appearance is the symbol of her boundless power of destruction; her Black Colour signifies that she is *Darkness hidden by Darkness:*

Her Nakedness indicates that the whole Universe is destroyed by her, and only she, the Power of Time, remains. Her Garland of Skulls represents that on her depends not only what lives,but also what remains after death. Death is not a total annihilation; it leaves behind some traces of previous life that also rests on her. Hence she is represented as wearing on her bosom, a garland of skulls, that once supported life, but are left behind after death; the corpse (*Śava*) on which she stands, is the symbol of the Universe in ruins. At the time of Universal destruction, only *Kālī*, the Power of Time, is all that remains; even *Śiva* or *Mahākālī* or *Puruṣa*, who is identified with the whole Universe, becomes, as it were, a corpse (*Śava*). It is interesting to note in this connection that *Śiva* or *Mahākāla* becomes a Corpse (*Śava*) when he is without that symbolises his Power (*Kālī*). The cremation ground (*Śmaśāna*) where she is invoked, indicates the dreadful sight of the Universal destruction, wherein she appears to create the Universe again. This is, in short, the symbolical meaning of the image of *Kālī*.

The conception of *Kālī* is also expressed by her mystic diagram(*Yantra)* and her mystic syllable for worship (*Mantra*). But her *Yantra* is subtler than her image, and her *Mantra is* the subtlest than her image, and her *Mantra* is the subtlest of all in expressing her nature, work and philosophy. *Kālī* is represented in the *Todala-tantra,* (*Paṭala-III)*, in eight different forms. They are - *Dakṣiṇakālī, Siddhakālī, Guhyakālī, Śrīkālī, Bhadrakālī, Cāmuṇḍākālī, Siddhakālī, Guhyakālī, Śrīkālī, Bhadrakālī, Cāmuṇḍākālī, Śmaśana-Kālī* and *Mahā-Kālī*. Each of these forms, and also each of the ten *Mahā-Vidyās*, represent different aspects and activities of the Power of Time (*Kālī*).

The form of *Dhūmāvatī* who is one of the ten *Mahāvidyās* represents one of the significant aspects of *Kālī*. It is seen in the *Tantras* that all the *Mahāvidyās* have their Lords or Counter parts, but *Dhāmāvatī* has none :

Why is it so? The answer may be that at the time of the Universal destruction, even *Mahākāla*, the Lord of *Kālī*, is destroyed, and only she appears as a widow in the form of *Dhūmāvatī*, looking hungry and thirsty, tired, and disgusted with the peculiar form, she has no husband, no children, no friends and relatives; and above all, she has nothing left to eat and drink:

The simple meaning, however, of all this is that *Dhūmāvati* represents the Power of Time standing outside Time and Space. She is detached, she is alone, and dreadful. But *Kālī* represents not only the aspect of destruction, but also the aspects of creation and preservation. She stands on the corpse of *Mahākāla* i.e. *Śiva*, and is also worshipped with him as her male counter part.

This *Mahākāla*, as has already been indicated, is nothing but the all-powerful eternal Time of which *Kālī* is the vital Energy and Force. Without her, the Universe is lifeless and even *Mahākāla* i.e. *Śiva* is like a corpse (*Śava*):

Kālī is kind (*Dakṣiṇā*) to the good and the noble persons and dreadful (*Karāla-vadanā*) to the bad and the wicked. The universe comes into being when she smiles, and it is destroyed when she frowns. She is both awe-inspiring and wonderful, grand and gracious in her divine appearance and action. She can easily be approached and propitiated through perfect devotion and complete self-surrender. Her path is accessible for the brave persons and not for the timid or the hesitant one.

It has already been said above that *Kālī* is the Deity of the dark and dreadful night of the

Universal destruction, she appears at the dead of the same night and stands on *Śiva* looking like the debris of the universe. This, in truth, is the awful back-ground on which the conception and worship of *Kālī* depends. Without it, the true significance of *Kālī* and her worship cannot fully be realised. The *Tantra,* therefore, enjoins that *Kālī* should be worshipped at the dark and dreadful mid-night of *Amāvasyā* in the cremation ground, which is full of skulls and bones of the dead and the charcoals of the funeral pyres. Her worship, performed in this way, enables a man to achieve great power and perfect knoweldge that would lead him to peace and prosperity, divinity and finally salvation:

The true significance of *Kālī*-worship is that it unvails the mystery of the Power of Time and shows how one can be free from the fear of death and destruction, and how one can realise that he is the child of *power,* or rather is *Power* itself. That is the philosophy contained in the concept of *Kālī.*

● ● ●

CHAPTER-IX

Nature of *Tantra Sādhanā*

Practice is better than precept. Mere speculation does not lead one to the self realization. Tantra is a system which deals with the disciplinary aspect of realization.

The *Śāktāsadhanā* combines the elements of Yoga, worship, prayer and meditation on the identity of the individual and the *Absolute*.[1] The *Tantras* accepted the monistic philosophy and *upaniṣads* appreciated the value of worship and prayer along with the *Bhakti* schools and the *yoga* system, laid great emphasis on the intimate relation between the body and the mind.[2] They preached an easy and short method of spiritual achievement, and sought to provide persons of all grades of equipment with suitable courses of discipline.[3] The *Sādhanā* contains in it, elements of all the important forms of *Sādhanā viz., yoga* and *Bhakti, Mantra* and *Homa, Jñāna* and *Karma*. All these when combined, go to show that the *Tāntric Sādhanā* is the synthesis of all that was good in the various forms of *Sādhanā* and that is why its promise to its followers of the

---

1. *Śaktisaṅgamatantra* 1/56.
2. Brahma (N.K.) *Hindu Philosophy*, p.83.
3. *Mahānirvāṇatantra* 2/20-22; 27.

easy and speedy attainment of the end-is justified.[1] The *Tantras* promise to give to the *Sādhaka* not merely (*Mukti*) but also enjoyment (*Bhukti*) i.e. not merely final beautitude (*Niśreyas)* but also progress (*Abhyudaya*).[2]

It is through the effort of the *Sādhaka* and the grace of the spiritual guide (*Guru)* that the serpent-power (*Kuṇḍalinī-śakti*) which generally lies dormant at the foot of the spiral column becomes awakened and joins to the *Absolute* who resides in the *Sahasrāracakra,* the highest centre of the cerebrum.[3] The word *Kuṇḍalinīśakti* is used to indicate the spiritual power or energy of the individual human being.

Most important feature of the *Tāntric sādhanā* is that *Tantras* recommend the combination of *Kriyā* and *Bhāvanā* i.e. action with imagination. Here it differs with *Vedānta* when it prescribe that realisation can he had through meditation (*Bhāvanā*) above. *Tantras,* though declaring the unity of *Jīva* and *Śiva*-differ from the *Vedānta* school on the point that the *Śivatva* of *Jīva* is an established fact, while according to the *Tantras* the *Śivatva* (absoluteness) is to be attained through *Sādhanā.*[4]

In the *Tantras,* the position of special importance is assigned to *Mantras.*[5] The deity is identical with the *Mantra,* which is the infallible

---

1. *Kulārṇavatantra* 2/21; 36.
2. *Kularnavatantra*. 3/96.
3. *Brahma (N.K.) Ibid.,* p.277.
4. *Kulārṇavatantra* 9/43.
5. Brahma (N.K.) *Ibid.,* p.278.

means of liberation. The *Tantras* believe in the eternity of *Mantra* which is designated as *Śabdabrahman*. The *Bījamantras* are not mere words- but are a concentrated thought of great power revealed to the *Sādhaka* in the hour of his profound illumination. *Mantrajapa* is prescribed.[1]

The *tantras* by great emphasis on *upāsanā*, and this seems to be derived from the *Purāṇas*[2] The worship of the deity, and the recitation of hymns in honour of the deity form important features in the *tantras* as well as in the *Purāṇ*as. The worshipper identifies himself in meditation with the deity he worships[3] and places before himself the fully blossomed condition represented by the deity as the ideal to be realised. According to the *tantras* that realisation of the identity between the *Jīva* and *Śiva*, is the supreme ideal.[4]

The *Tantras* recognise three distinct stages of *Sādhanā* viz. purification (*Śuddhi)*, illumination (*sthiti*) and unification (*arpaṇa*), corresponding roughly to *Karma, Bhakti* and *Jñāna*.[5] The individual has to undergo various processes in order to purify himself. This purification is to be attained through both *Bhāvanā* (meditation) and *Kriyās*, through the harmorious working of both mind and body. Real worship of *Śiva*, is only possible by a heart that has also freed from all impurities. The last stage is of complete surrender, absolute merging and unification. The *Jīvaśakti* identified with *Śiva-śakti*. In this stage, no worship, no distinction but there is only *Bliss*-eternal and *infinite*.[1]

---

[1] *Mahānirvāṇatantra*. 5/33.

[2] Brahma (N.K.) *Ibid.*, p.278.

[3] *Gandharvatantra* 8/22.

[4] *Śaktisaṅgamtantra, Kālīkhaṇḍa,* Ibid., 1/ṛ-31.

[5] Brahma (N.K.) *Ibid.*, p.282. Mātṛkābhedatantra 12/44; 3/39.

The *Tantras* are really an epitome of all the Scriptures of the *Hindus*, and contain within their compass almost all the special characteristics of the various forms of *Sādhanā*. If *Tantrism* precribes actions of the most rudimentary type and seems to be very much particular about their infinite details, it again prescribes meditation on the identity of the individual and the Absolute and thus reminds us of the high transcendent philosophy of the *Upaniṣads*.[2] It prescribes different equipments and capacities. It distinguishes three classes of *Sādhakas* in order of merit, viz. the *Paśu*, the *Vīra* and the *Divya*.[3] The *Paśu* is a person who has not yet attained self-control but is attempting to have mastery over his passions and impulses. The *Vīra* is the *Sādhaka* who has attained complete self-control and does not forget himself even in the most trying and tempting circumstances. He is not only allowed, but is definitely instructed to include, such things as wine, meat, etc. as articles of offering to God.[4] The *Paśu* is not allowed even to touch or to have a sight of those things. The method prescribed for the *Vīra* or the *Kaula* is beset with danger.[5] It is more risky than the holding of a snake or clasping round the neck of a tiger. The *Divyasādhaka* need not undergo the trials that the *Vīra* has to pass through and is allowed to take substitutes of all material things in his process of worship. He does not require the help of external objects for rousing his spiritual sentiments, and the meditative mood emerges spontaneously in him. Apart from this class division of the *Sādhakas*, the *Tantras* also mention the *Kaulācāra*, which forms the highest stage, and which does away with all rules and injunctions of the *Śāstras*. For the *Kaula*, there is neither any *Vidhi* nor any *Niṣedha*, neither merit nor demerit, neither virtue nor sin.[1] Each *Sādhaka* must follow its own line of development according to his capacities and attainments.[2]

---

[1] *Śaktisaṅgamtantra-Sundarī Khanda*. 2/ś-37.

[2] Brahma (N.K.) *Ibid.*, p.290.

[3] *Mahānirvāṇatantra* 1/51-53.

[4] *Mahānirvāṇtantra*, 1/57.

[5] *Kulārṇavatantra*. 2/122.

The *Tantric Sādhanā* came into prominence perhaps later than the *Purāṇas*, although some of the *Tantras* might be earlier than the *Purāṇas*, and the philosophy of the *Tantras* served as the basis of the *Bhakti* form *of Sādhanā* inculcated by the *Purāṇas*.[3] There is so much similarity between the *Paurāṇika* and *Tantric* teaching that it seems unjustifiable to regard them as two distinct forms of *Sādhanā*. The union of *Śiva* and *Śakti* (God and Goddess) of the *Tantras* are also mentioned in the *Purāṇas*.[4] The eternal connection between *Śabda* and *Artha* and the regarding of *Śabda-brahman* and *Parabrahman* as two aspects of the *Supreme Lord*, emphasized by the *Tantras,* find expression in the *Purāṇas*. The doctrine of the identity of the devotee is also mentioned with the diety herself.[1] In fact the *Purāṇas* and the *Tantras* preach almost the same philosophy as well as the same method of realisation. Both emphasize the importance of worship and rituals. Both these preach the cult of *Bhakti* - and their god is also the same.

---

[1] *Mahānirvāṇtantra* 4/36-45.

[2] *Mātṛkabhedatantra* 14/3-10.

[3] Brahma (N.K.), *Philosophy of Hindu Sādhanā*, p.81.

[4] *Śaktisaṅganatantra, Sundarī Khaṇḍa* 4/55.
Devī Bhāgavata.7/15-16.

Thus we see that the *Tantras* give the synthesis between the *Upaniṣads* and the *Purāṇas,* by accepting the philosophy of the former and the practical *Sādhanā* of the latter.

The second form of *Upāsanā, viz., Pratīkopāsanā* concentrates on the particular form. It regards one symbol as the representative of everything. Just as the brain is the centre of the organism, so also does the *Pratīka* symbolises the source of the universe, and the worship of everything. Here the source is found out and worship is concentrated on this source. Here we find the transition from the *many* to the *one*. No longer is there any need for the multifarious activities in different directions, but now all actions turn towards the centre, the Symbol or the *Pratīka*. This *Pratīka* worship is the common characteristic of all forms of *Bhakti upāsanā,* viz, the *Vaiṣṇava,* the *Śaiva* and the *Śākta*. The *Pratīka* symbolises the one all-engrossing object of adoration, worship and love. It is the creator, preserver and destroyer of the universe and is present always in everything.

---

1. *Kulārṇavatantra* 9/42.

The emphasis here is on the object and it is predominently an objective *Sādhanā*.

Upāsanā implies a close contact, an intimate relationship, a nearness and a proximity, or rather, an identity of levels, between the worshipper and the worshipped. The *anugrahopāsanā*, in identifying the two, leads us to a position which should be regarded as the highest stage of attainment that can be conceived. Even the least trace of duality that is thought to be essential to worship or to a relation of love by all the adherents of the *Bhakti school* is, theoretically at least, detrimental to the highest realisation. If it is a fact that the more we approximate the ideal, the better we can understand and love the same, it is only reasonable to argue that the very best love and attainment would imply a stage where there is not the least difference between the worshipper and the worshipped leaving any room for duality. This principle is adopted in the *Tantras* which declare that it is possible to worship *Śiva*, only after becoming *Śiva*, though they do not advocate an absolute monism like *Śaṅkara*. The *dhyāna* of the deity to be worshipped precedes the worship itself, and in the process of *dhyāna* the *sādhaka* is to identify himself with the deity itself.

The *Bhakti* line of *Sādhanā* lies intermediate between *jñāna* and *Karma*. It does not, like *Karma*, rely entirely upon the lower processes and seek to control the higher by the lower; nor like *Jñāna*, does it solely rest upon the transcendent functioning of reason. It seeks to elevate human consciousness through the divine emotion of love which subdues all lower passions and impulses. Love can perform all that higher reason can command if not even more, and all this is done with ease and spontaneity.

Bhakti combines law with love, vidhi (obligatory rites and precesses with *rāga* (spontaneous love), and thus it seeks help from the body and its processes also. *Madhusūdanasarasvati* has rightly observed that *Bhakti* is closely allied to both *Karma* and *Jñāna*, and that it removes all obstacles. As it combines both forms of *Sādhanā*, *viz.*, controlling the higher by the lower and by the higher-it also achieves its end quickly.

Just as the polytheism and the elaborate details of the *Karma-kāṇḍa* of the *Vedas* had led by way of reaction to the detailless and speechless intellectualism and abstract monism of the *Upaniṣads*, so also did the extreme intellectualism and highly abstract philosophy of the *Upaniṣad* age set people in search of a more concrete principle that might appeal to their feelings as well as suit their average intellectual capacities. The *Purāṇas* fulfilled this want by supplying the conception of the Personal God and preaching the *Bhakti* cult. The triad, *Brahmā*, *Viṣṇu* and *Śiva*, appear prominently, for the first time, in the *Purāṇas*. He stands as the *Supreme God*, ruling the whole universe and the destinies of all beings. God is no longer conceived of as a limited Power of Powers, nor is He the transcendent *Brahman* or the intellectual *ideal* of the *Upaniṣads*. He resides in the hearts of all beings and as *antaryāmī* guides their destinies and course of action. He is to be realised not by the philosophical argumentations of the intellect but through devotion (*bhakti*). He is not only Omniscient and all powerfull, but is also all merciful. Out of infinite compassion for his creatures, he descends to the level of finite human beings and, taking their hands, raises them up to His Blessed Abode. As *Omnipotent, Absolute* and *Full,* He is in want of nothing and is not to be won over by means of sacrifices or gifts, worship or prayer, *mantras* or works. As all merciful and the fulfiller of all wishes, however, He comes to satisfy the religious need of the individual and collective, whenever it is sincerely and eagerly felt. He is thus to be attained by devotion alone.

The *Purāṇa*s abound in legends about the birth and deeds of God in *His* various manifestations. Apparently, the legends are intended to attract the attention of ordinary people and to preach them a large amount of religious knowledge in the garb of ordinary stories. Very often the legends signify deep spiritual truths which become revealed through ceaseless meditation on the inner meanings of the symbols embodied in the legends. The myths are not the creations of unbridled imagination conceived in the childhood of the race, but represent, *genuine spiritual experiences obtained and always obtainable by special methods and capable of special experimental demonstration.* The symbolism of the romance of gods and goddesses, embodied in the *Purāṇas,* is intended to attract people by their aparently charming and simple contents.

There are various ways of realization prescribed by the Indian wisdom. Like others, this *Tāntric* way of realization is based upon some pre-suppositions, among them the cardinal one is that, it accepts the physical body both as the residing place and the instrument for the realization of *Higher Reality*. As the *Merutantra* declares, *Whatever is here is else where and whatever is not here is no where*. This leads us to conclude the identical relationship between the macrocosm and the microcosm. So for *Tantraśāstra*, it is not necessary to be lost or to roam into the vastness of the universe but *sādhaka* can realize his nature by concentrating on his own self.

Self resides into the body. So for the realization of former, later should be purified first. So the step is the purification of body which can be done with external aids and the inner purification of body can be done through inner worship or meditation. How to do this or which are the essentials of *Tantrasādhanā* ? This can be asked.

Before going to that aspect let us glance over one problem which is left undiscussed: i.e. why *sādhanā* is necessary? *Tāntricsādhanā* is not a *sādhanā* in abstraction but its results and consequences can be realized in everyday life. *Tantrasādhana* is basically a *sādhana* of *Śakti* or energy which is required to be manifested according to prescribed systematic practices. Nobody is left out from the clutches of energy. The very term *Śakti* is significant in this regards. As the *Devībhagavata* declares: In the term *Śakti*, *Śaka* stands for superhuman powers (*Aiśvarya*) and *Śakti* for the daring (*parākrama*).[1] Are we not in search of these qualities? We, the lay man, do worship for the fulfilment of the desire for worldly pleasures, while a *Tāntric* initiated

---

[1] *Aiśvaryavācanaṁ Śasca ktiḥ parākramabodhakam Devībhāgavata.*

sādhaka does this for the sublimation. So here we can get the justification of the significant verse of the *Kulārṇavatantra* in which it declares that *Tantra* gives both indulgence or worldly pleasure (*Bhoga*) and liberation (*Mokṣa*).[1]

How its techniques work, which give such results, generally not possible to be achieved through other systems? *Tantra* techniques lead positively to the very source of pleasure, that is *mind*. As we know, mind is the cause of pleasure and pain. *Tantra* says that the mind which binds us to the worldly affairs, the same mind can be the instrument of liberation. The potentialities of the mind is immense. We can utilize only the powers of conscious mind which is only a few dropw of a sea of mental powers. The rest of the mind, which we are not in a position to utilize, is lying dormant which in terms of psychology is known as subconscious mind. *Tantrasādhanā* is nothing but the awakening or unfolding of that inner potentialities.

Therapeutically, this aspect is also significant. The findings of Dr. Dasture which are published in the *Times of India,* suggest that the resistance power of the mind or will power against disease can prevent the results of the disease like cancer. And at the same time, a person with a weak mind may become victim of the disease only by mere imagination.[2] Will power or the power of resistance against disease is a gift of nature to everybody. In some bodies, it is partially awakened while in others it is more awakened. *Tantrasādhanā* is basically designed for strengthening the mind including cultivation of resistance power.

---

[1] *Yogī cennaiva bhogī syād bhogī cennaiva yogavit* ।
Bhogayogātmakaṁ Kaulaṁ tasmāt Sarvādhikaṁ priye ।।
Kulārṇavatantra, 2-23.

[2] *The Times of India* dated 1.5.1983, Sunday Edition.

How this *sādhanā* takes place? We come back to our original question. Many essentials are prescribed for the traditional *Tantrasādhaka*. Among them, the basic one is the competency of *sādhaka*. As it is said, *Tantrasādhanā* is just like walking on the edge of razor. So for it, *guru* (guide) is required who can test the fitness of a *sādhaka* and then initiate him. Initiation is a passport to enter into the realm of *sādhanā*. After having finished some external mode of worship, *guru* then teaches some inner aspects of worship in which *Nyāsa* (Identification), *Mudra* (Meditation), *Bhūtaśuddhi* (Purification of bodily constituents), *Prāṇapratiṣṭhā* (Establishment of self) etc., take place. We shall deal with this in detail at proper place.

Now, something about the approach of *Tantrasādhanā*. *Tantra* accepts the physical body positively hence it also accepts its impulses and instincts. Generally instincts become the cause of bondage but novel view of *Tantra* is that by gratification of these impulses and senses, one can transcend the limitation of fluite experiences. Of course, this path is a slippery one which can lead one to the abyss of downfall if proper care is not taken. *Tantra* has not overlooked this fact. According to the nature of mental level of *sādhaka*, it has prescribed three groups which are termed as the *Paśuvīra* and *divyasādhaka* or in other terms *Tāmasika*, *Rājasika*, and *Sāttvikasādhaka* respectively.

In this chapter we shall see about the *Tantrasādhanā* under two headings, *A* and *B*. *A* consists of the essentials of *Tantrasādhanā* while *B* contains the process of awakening the inner potentialities. Now let us proceed with the essentials of *Tantrasādhanā*.

A) 1. Essentials of *Tantrasādhanā*:

Tāntrikasādhanā system is a sea in which the flows of various systems merge. As it is difficult to contain the sea in a pot, so it is difficult to contain all the details in a chapter. We, therefore, limit our task to present introduction of some of the salient features of *Tantrasādhanā*. *Tantrasādhanā* is that which produces results of material or spiritual type. Whatever may be the result, the outer and the inner purification is the essential aspect of *Tantrasādhanā*. The central point of *Tantrasādhanā* is to worship deity by becoming deity. It means, as Tantra believes, what man worships is not that which is something outside but his own consciousness itself. Though there are varieties in *Tantrasādhanā*, here, we shall mention only those notions which are largely accepted by all. We here first start with the significant place of *guru* in *Tantrasādhanā*.

a. Spiritual guide : *Guru* :

In the *Tantrasādhanā*, *Guru* enjoys the significant status. Though in present times the so-called *Gurus* have emerged out like mushrooms due to lack of proper understanding of the real meaning of *Guru*. The *Kulārṇavatantra*, the prime source of this notion, declares that the so-called gurus are so many but the real one is rare. How to draw a line of demarcation between an authentic and fake *guru*? The *Kulārṇavatantra* has presented certain characteristics for distinguishing the real *Guru* from the fake one. What are they? Before we go to this, let us see what the term *Guru* stands for?

Many definitions have been given by different treatise but the *Kulārṇavatantra* declares that in the term *Guru*, *gu* stands for darkness while *ru* stands for removal. Hence *Guru* is he, who removes darkness of nescience.[1]

Nescience of what? Like all other systems *Tantra* also accepts the identical relationship between the individual self and the universal self. Nescience of this fact is the hurdle in the way of *sādhanā*. Only realized guru who is but *Śiva* himself or the person who has realized Śiva within himself can remove this obstacle and because of this, *Tantra* sees no difference between the *Śiva* and *Guru*.[2]

If a *guru* and *Śiva* are identical then why lord chooses to manifest *Himself* through the medium of *Guru*? Why should not *He* manifest directly? One may have such questions. One of such questions is asked by *Pārvatī* to Lord Śiva in the *Kulārṇavatantra*. In response to that question Lord Śiva replies that *He* is subtle, formless and being so, it is difficult to perceive. How then He can be worshipped? So out of compassion, Lord Śiva takes the form of *Guru*. Worship of *Him* grants

---

1. *Guśabdastvandhakārassyāt ru Śabdastannirodhakaḥ* | *Andhakāranirodhitvāt gururityabhidhiyate* | | Kulārṇavatantra 17-8.
2. *Yah Śivaḥ Savargaḥ Sūkṣmaśconmanā niṣkalosvyayaḥ* | *Vyomākāśe ajosnantaḥ Sa kathaṁ pūjyate priye* | | *Ibid*. 13-51.

liberation and fulfilment.[1] And being so, it is also declared by the same *Tantra* than the Guru is none other than Śiva without His three eyes. Viṣṇu without four arms and Brahmā without *His* four faces.[2] These are the symbolic explanations of the various modes of the *Higher Reality*.

What are the characteristics of such a venerable *Guru*? This has been explained in almost all *Tantras*. The list of the qualities of *Guru* is such a long that it takes two chapters in the *Kulārṇavatantra*. Hence it is impossible to reproduce it here. But here we can mention some of them so that the layman can see who can be the real *Tāntric Guru*. The first requirement is that guru should be a realized one. Only such person can initiate other person. He also should know the past, present and future. He should be acquainted with the science of *Mantra* and *Yantra* also. *Guru* also should have a capacity to purifying the impurities of all kinds of disciple. Such and others are also the qualities of guru described in *Tantra*. These types of qualities is almost rarely to be found in a man in this age. But if suppose, somebody gets this type of personality, he would surely realize the glimpse of the *Higher Reality*. And because of this significance, it is declared with reverence that *Guru* can save us from the wrath of even god but nobody can save us from the

---

1. *Ata eva Śivaḥ Sākṣād gurūrūpaṁ Samāsrītaḥ* I
Bhaktyā Sampūjito devi bhūktiṁ muktiṁ prayacchati I I
Ibid. 13-52.

2. *Atrinetraḥ Śivaḥ Sākṣād acaturbāhuḥahcutaḥ* I *Acaturvadano brahmā Śrīguruḥ kathitaḥ priye* I I Ibid 13-57.

wrath of Guru.[1] Only such an efficient *Guru* can initiate a disciple. What is the significance of initiation and how Guru initiates disciple that we shall see under the title *initiation*.

b. Initiation : *Dīkṣā*:

Like *Guru*, initiation is also an important notion in the *Tantrasādhanā*. In the *Kulārṇavatantra*, it is declared that there can be no *Mokṣa* or liberation without *Dīkṣā* or initiation, and initiation can not be there without a teacher or *Guru*. So only *Guru* can initiate the diciple for the *sādhanā* according to his competency.[2]

Why initiation is required this can be asked. In response to this, we can say, our mind is just like a garden. As in the garden, the poisonous sprouts come out with the good one, likewise, in our mind also, bad thoughts or the poisonous sprouts of desires also come out. At the time of initiation, guru removes the unrequired things from the mind of disciple through *Śaktipāta*. (Transplantation of power). The very term *Dikṣā* reflects this fact. *Dī* means that which gives knowledge while *kṣa* means that which removes animal sprouts. The *Viśvasāratantra* gives the definition of this term. According to it, *Dīkṣā* means that which abolishes sin and gives divine knowledge.[3]

---

1. Harau rūṣte guruṣtrātā gurau rūṣte na kaucana।
2. *Vinādīkṣāṁ na mokṣaḥ syāduktaṁ siva śāsane*।
   Sāca na syād vinācāryamiti ācārya paramparā।। *Ibid* 13-3.
3. Dīyate jñānasadbhāvaḥ kṣīyate pasuvāsanā। Taken from the *Tantramahāvijñāna* by Sharma Śri Rama.

How does guru creates this type of condition or in other words which are the ways through which *Guru* gives initiation? Three types of initiation are largely accepted in the *Tantrasādhanā*. The first is *Sparśadīkṣā* or bodily identification to create a type of rapport in the student or *sādhaka*. (*Tavaṛadyam me hṛdyam dadhāmi* | | etc.). The second is *Dṛṣakjña,* initiation by sight and the third is *Mānasadikṣā,* initiation by thought.[1] The same *Tantra,* the *Kulārṇavatantra,* also describes how *Guru* gives these three types of initation. The first initiation by touch is like a slow nourishing by the bird with the warmth of its wings. In the initiation through sight disciple is initiated as nourishing of the young by the fish through the seeing alone, while the initiation by thought is like a nourishing of its young by the tortoise by only thinking of them.

Through these ways of initiation *Guru* first removes the impurities and transfers his energy into the disciple, so that the latent power of the disciple can be awakened. But for this, and also as we have seen in the characteristics of the *Guru, Guru* should have awakened the *Kuṇḍalinīśakti*. And only this type of realized soul can open the centres of energy of disciple.

To make it more clear, we can put here the simily of a match box. In the disciple, the energy is already there as coating of *sulphur* on the match box. For the activation of which, requires the external aid which is provided by *Guru* at the time of initiation.

---

[1] *Sparśākhyā devi dṛṣkājñā mānasākhyā mahesvari/ Kriyāya devi dīksā tridhā smṛutā* | | *Ibid* 14-38.

After the initiation, the process of inner and outer purification starts. First purification of body (*Bhūtaśuddhi*) takes place and then purification of mind follows. We shall now see something about *Bhūtaśuddhi*.

c. Purification of body: *Bhūtaśuddhi*:

Bhūtaśuddhi is a distinctive feature of the *Tantrasādhanā*. It is considered as an indispensable discipline prior to all rituals. *Śuddhi* means purification. Especially, in the *Tantrasādhanā*, it is believed that each limb of the worshiper should be purified. Only then he becomes fit for worship of divinity. Not only the purification of body, but in the *Tantrasādhanā* as the *Kulārṇavatantra* declares, requires five types of purification, which are namely the purification of self, of place, of material, of *Mantra* and of deity.[1]

First the place of worship should be sanctified by cleanings, swiping etc. and should be decorated with flowers, incense etc., so that the mind can concentrate on deity. Substance also should be purified by sprinkling pure water. The deity should be purified by placing it on the seat and also by infucing life (*prāṇapratiṣṭhā*). We shall see the details of the purification of self. Self resides in body so first the body should be purified, which in *Tantra*, is known as *Bhūtaśuddhi*.

---

[1] *Ātmasthānamanodravyaṁ dehaśuddhistu pancamī* I *Kulārṇavatantra* 6-16.

Bhūtaśuddhi means the purification of the elements of the body. The purpose of purification is to make clean the internal and external atmosphere of *sādhaka's* body. The outer purification can be done by bathing etc. and inner by *Nyāsa, Prāṇāyāma* etc. As Kapāli Śāstry thinks, *It must be noted here that the purification of the various limbs, outer physical and the inner mind stuff aims not only at the eradication of the narrowing and obscuring influences of the elemental forces and the universal weakness of the lower Nature, but inviting in their place the opposite good influence of the beningn forces, the powers of the supra physical worlds. That is why in the actual Bhūta śuddhi, every part is offered to a deity and the group of deities that are invoked to occupy their places in the body vessel, ādhāra, constitutes indeed the minor gods who are the parivaras (family) of the chosen chief.*[1]

How the process of purification takes place? Our body is composed of five elements namely, Earth, (*pṛthvī*), *Āp* (Water), Fire (*Tejas*), Air (*Vāyu*) and Ether (*Ākāśa*). Purification or harmony of these is the real *Bhūtaśuddhi*.

According to the *Tantrasādhanā*, the whole process should be done mentally (*kalpayet*). *Sādhaka* has to first imagine the predominance of particular element on the specific part of the body to which that part belongs, or that particular element is predominant in that particular part of the body. For instance, the earth element starts from feet to thigh, water element from thight to navel, fire from navel to heart, air from heart to centre of eyebrow and either is predominant on the most upper part of the body. *Sādhaka* has to concentrate these elements on their specific parts.

---

[1] Sastry, Kapali T.V., *Further lights: The Veda and the Tantra*, pp. 242-243, Published by Sri Aurobindo Library, 1951.

After doing this, he has to imagine the process of absorbtin of gross element into subtle one, i.e. the earth into water, water into fire, fire into air, air into other, other into ego, ego into nature (prakriti) and prakriti into god. While doing so, according to *Tantra*, he also has to imagine a man who is made out of bodily impurities (*Pāpapuruṣa*). The idea of *Pāpapuruṣa* or *man of impurities* is an acceptance of fact that prior to the process of purification every *sādhaka* is full of bodily as well as mental impurities. As he proceeds through initiation to *Bhūtaśuddhi*, he gradually gets established into his new position of a purified soul with the result that the evils in him, in the form of impurities, gradually fades away. In traditional terminology, it is a process of first drying and then of burning that person full of impurities so that the same person, after purification, spiritual man fit for becoming a vessel or receptacle of spiritual forces of *Śakti*.

The process of drying away and burning away of the *Pāpapuruṣa* should be done with the repetition of the seed letter *Vāyu*, that is, *Yaṁ*, and fire, that is *Raṁ*. Now the whole body of the blackman results into an ash. Then with the help of nectar which constantly flows from the *Sahasrāra*, *sādhaka* has to build a new pure body in imagination, which should start from *Lord of Nature*, from nature to intellect, from intellect to ego, from ego to other, from other to air, air to fire, fire to water,

water to earth, earth to vegetable, from vegetable to food, from food to semen and from semen to *puruṣa,* that is *I am*. This *I am* is not natural ago. It is a feeling of self-realization.

This is what *sādhaka* has to do mentally. Only after this he becomes entitled to worship deity. We can here see the justification of the principle of *Tāntricsādhanā,* that is to worship deity only by becoming deity (*Devao bhūtvā yajet devam*). Therefore, *Tantra* is a way to raise one's own consciousness to the level of divine.

This practice should be done by *sādhaka* in daily worship. Therapeutically it also effects the body. According to the *Āyurveda,* harmony between *vāta* (Air), *pitta* (Fire) and *kapha* (Phlegm) results into health. These three are nothing but the combination of the five gross elements (*Pañca mahābhūta*). Purification of these five elements necessarily ends into health. And the body gets fortified against all diseases altogether.

After purification of constituents of body or *Bhūtaśuddhi* comes the *Cittaśuddhi,* purification of mind which should be done through *Nyāsa.* How *Nyāsa* is performed that we shall see now.

d. Purification of Mind: *Nyāsa:*

The process of *Taṇtrasādhanā* is from gross to subtle. Being subtle, purification of mind comes after purification of body. This inner purification can be done through *Nyāsa.* How this purification takes place?

The root verb of *Nyāsa* is *Nyas*-to place. With the help of the reference of *Kapaliśastriar,* we could see that *Bhūtaśuddhi* does not mean only removal of bad elements or impurities but also placing of good thoughts or divinity. After dissolving the sinful body, and building spiritual body through imagination the body is to be instilled with *prāṇa* or deity. The process of establishing deity starts with *Nyāsa*. Like *Bhūtaśuddhi*, this process also should be done mentally.

There are various types of *Nyāsas*. Namely, *Mantranyāsa, Mahāṣoḍhānyāsa, Karanyāsa* etc. More details about this have been given into the *Kulārṇavatantra*. The *Nyāsa* is done by placing the top of the finger on the various parts of the body. As for example in the *Mātṛkanyāsa*, alphabets are placed on the limbs of the body. In the esoteric science, letters are considered as the manifestation of *Śabdabrahman* and being so they are considered as deities. This *Mātrikānyāsa* is also bifurcated into two parts which are namely, the outer *Mātṛkānyāsa*, (*Bahirmātṛkānyāsa*) and the inner *Mātṛkānyāsa* (*Āantaramātṛkānyāsa*). In the former type, the letters are placed on the limbs of the physical body imaginatively by touching that part of the body, while in the later type they are placed on the six subtle centres, (*ṣaṭcakras*). The details of this, is given in all the *Tantric* works which are related with *Tantrasādhanā*.

What is the esoteric significance of the rite? It is that, the *sādhaka* should realize that his essence is *Spirit*, and body and mind are but its manifestations of the *Spirit*. All is divine and everything is nothing but consciousness. By *Vyāpakanyāsa* or expanding identification, he mentally spreads the presence of consciousness throughout himself.

Then he becomes *Deva* and only by becoming so he can worship *Deva*.

The scientific significance of this rite is that, as we know, man becomes what he thinks. Thought moulds our intellectual, moral character. The transformation of being takes place through the transformation of thought. If we constantly think about the divinity or we think positively, it necessarily results into the transformation of personality. Thus for transformation of human personality into a divine one, *Tantra* touches at the very root of the process of all transformation and brings about wonderful results. The mortal frame which is considered fake, susceptible to diseases gets transformed into a robust fortified, not easily susceptible to diseases. The therapeutic value of this process is invaluable.

The therapeutic vlue of this rite also can be applied into *Yoganidrā* or relaxation. *Nyāsa* also means identification with divine thought in which *sādhaka* forgets everything about the worldly affairs. This is the true relaxation and it is considered as the best medicine for the diseases of modern world, which arise from way, *Nyāsa* can be equated with the systematic method for inducing complete physical mental relaxation.

After purification of body mind in the divine body, *sādhaka* installs the life. This rite, in *Tāntric* terms is known as *prāṇapratiṣṭhā*. Now we shall see about it.

e. Installation of life: *Prāṇapratiṣṭhā:*

Prāṇapratiṣṭhā is a unique contribution of *Tantrasādhanā* to the oriental *sādhanā* system. In the external worship, at initial level, *sādhaka* worships an image of Śiva or of Viṣṇu or of devi. At little advanced level *Yantra,* images of deities like Śiva, Brahma or Viṣṇu present higher reality into gross form. A step advance, in this direction of *gross to subtle* is presented through replacing image by Yantra, which is a diagram on the plate with seed letters or numbers symbolizing the union of the gross and subtle or individual self-consciousness with the divine consciousness, worship takes place instead of image worship.

Tantra believes that mere image or diagram does not itself become effective. It should be charged with the life force. This does not mean that they are dead. According to *Tantra,* there is nothing like a dead thing. What here happens is, the *sādhaka,* through concentration establishes his life force into that *Yantra* and worships it. So here actually what *sādhaka* worships is his consciousness only.

Like external worship, this rite also takes place in internal worship. After the purification of body and mind, *sādhaka* installs the life force in his divine body.

But what is the significance of this rite? According to the *Śāktatantra,* everything is a manifestation of energy. It is present everywhere but an ordinary man does not consider this fact. So at the initial level, he has to imagine that the object of worship is alive. One should not worship what is inferior to him or her. The worshipped should be superior and must be conscious in nature. And because of this, *Prāṇa* or life should be infused into the worshipped one. But this is not a process as Arthur Avalon says *to spread a butter on a bread* but as he thinks the significance behind this rite is *to enliven the consciousness of the worshiper into a realization of his presence.*[1]

How this process should be done? This should be done with the help of *Mantra, Japa* and *Purścaraṇa*. Now let us see something about it.

f. *Mantra:*

The place of *Mantra* in the *Tantrasādhanā* is very significant. Not a single *Tāntric* rite is done without *Mantra*.

The root verb of *Mantra* is *Man* means to meditate. In the *Nyāsa*, we saw the significance of thought power. *Mantra* is nothing but the condenced form of that thought power. And that is why proper pronunciation and concentration on it gives result.

In the *Mantrasādhanā*, *Mantras* are divided into four groups namely friendly, serving, supporting and destroying. At the time of initiation, *Guru* according to the nature of disciple gives the proper *Mantra* and that *Mantra* should be done constantly. This is known as *Japa*.

g. *Japa:*

Japa means repetition of *Mantra*. This process cultivates power of concentration. After sitting in any convenient posture in the silent place, *sādhaka* recites the *Mantra* into which he has been initiated.

---

[1] Avalon, Arthur: *Śakti and Śākta*, p. 543, published by Ganesh and Co., Sixth edition, 1965.

Japa is of three kinds: (1) *Vācikajapa* in which Mantra is uttered audibly, (2) *Upāṁsujapa* in which only movement of lips is visible but no voice is heard and the last one is (3) *Mānasika* Japa which is considered as the highest form of Japa in which only repetition takes place with a single mind. One thing should be remembered here that only mechanical repetition does not create anything for the effective result, one has to do *Japa* with faith, aspiration and devotion.

Tāntric notion of *Yajña* also leads one from the individuality to the universality. The concept of *Yajña* is the core of the *Sādhanā aspect*. In *Sādhanā, Sādhaka* offers many objects like flowers, lamp of fire, fragrant powder, various types of corns namely *Til,* Cooked rice, *Java,* milk etc. But in *Tantrasādhanā* there is no need to offer all these things in gross form. Because a *Sādhaka* mentally offers all the five elemental forces or the five gross elements (*Pancamahābhūta*) namely Earth (*Pṛthvī*), Water (*Āp*), Fire (*Tejas*), *Vāyu* (Air) and Ether (*Ākāśa*) in the place of flower, lamp, powder etc. Whatever he does physically that is not important in *Tantrasādhanā* but he is mentally attuned with the universe and offers it to desired deity. This kind of *Yajña* removes the boundary of limitations and *Sādhaka* feels identity with the entire cosmos.

Now let us see what seems objectionable to lay man in this symbol. As we have mentioned, in sacrifice, sometimes animals are also offered due to lack of proper knowledge of *Tāntric* meaning of animal. The *Tantra* like *Yoginītantra, Ānandakalpa* etc. have clearly mentioned that the animals like vice should be killed with the sword of knowledge.[1] From this reference we can say without having ary doubt that if we take the real meaning of ablation, there is nothing objectionable. On the contrary the proper view leads one to the infinite from finite or from individuality to universality.

Now apart from these symbols, which are largely related with sex concept, there are also some symbols which are highly significant in the *Tāntriksādhanā*. Among them, Symbol of 5 *Makāra's* is the basic one. Now let us see about it.

D. *Pancamakāras*

The misinterpretation of the symbol of 5 *Makāras* plays prominent role in the degeneration of the *Tāntric* tradition and system. In *Tāntrism*, there are also some sub-sects namely, *Vāmācāra*, *Dakṣinācāra* etc. Among them 5 Makāra's comes under the title *Vāmācāra*. Let us see first why it is known as 5 *Makāras*. It is known as so because there are five items which start with the syllable *M* that is why it is recognized as *5 M's*. These are namely *Madya* (Wine), *Māṁsa* (Meat), *Matsya* (Fish), *Mudrā* (Grain) and *Maithuna* (Copulation). Let us see each of the syllable respectively.

i. *Madya*– Wine:

Madya means wine. The inherent quality of *Madya* is to make man aloof from the world. To forget the frustration created from the machine age, man resorts to take wine, which gives him temporary relief.

---

[1] *Puṇyāpuṇyapaśuṁ hatvā jñānakhadagena yogivat* I *Yoginitantra*. Sri Ram Sharma. *Tantramahāvijñāna* (Hindi), Part I, p. 253.

Madya is not utilized in *Tantra* in the sense of wine. In *Tantra, Madya* is not a liquor but as the *Kulārṇavatantra* declares, it is an energy.[1] All of us have a treasure of energy which is hidden in our body. *Tantra* shows the approach of awakening of it. *Sādhaka*, who awakens the centres of energy (*Cakra*) releases his senses from the engrossment (Pāśa) of the outer world. The utilization of this *Tāntric Madya* results into not in a temporary relief as it so happens in the gross wine but it gives life-time bliss to the *Sādhaka*. By doing so he yokes his self with his original nature, that is *Śiva* or limitless infinite element. The peculiarity of *Tāntric Madya* is that, as the *Kulārṇavatantra* declares it leads *Sādhaka* to *Brahman,*[2] or a state known as *Brāhmī sthiti* (i.e. identity with ultimate *Reality*).

Hence for *Tantra, Madya* is not a wine and *Tāntric Sādhaka* is not a drunkard but he is a worshipper of *Śakti* or energy.

ii. *Māṁsa*--Meat:

The meaning of *Māṁsa* is meat. It is one of the seven components of the body i.e. *Rakta* (Blood), *Rasa* (Essence), *Māṁsa* (Meat), *Majja* (Veins), *Asthi* (Bone), *Śukra* (Semen) and *Meda* (Marrow). Meat is utilized for food purpose by animals as well as human beings. But how this meat is related with *Tantra*?

---

[1] *Surā Saktiḥ Śivo māṁsaṁ tadbhoktā bhairavaḥ svyaṁ/*
The Kulārṇavatantra 5.79.

[2] *Madirā brahmagāḥ proktāḥ cittaśodhanasādhanā* ।
The Kulārṇavatantra 5-41.

In the *Tāntric Pūjā,* meat of an animal, sometimes of a human being also is offered to a deity for the satisfaction of deity. But to utilize a gross meat is not consistent with the *Tāntric* meaning of meat. What is then the *Tāntric* meaning of meat? one may question.

Generally, we get meat by killing an animal. In *Tantra* whenever the term animal is used, it does not indicate animal like goat, donkey, deer etc. In *Tantra,* man in a natural state is considered as *Paśu* or an animal. To sacrifice this animal means to raise man from his natural state to a *Supra-natural* state or even to the spiritual state. Offering meat means a process of sublimation, from gross to subtle. According to the *Kulārṇavatantra* those who does so is the real eater of meat and rest are the killers of life.

So *Tantra* has never favoured the killing of any gross animal but one has to kill his animal like gross instincts.

iii. Matsya--*Fish*:

Matsya stands for fish. In *Tantra* it symbolically represents mind and *Prāṇa,* the Vital force.

As fish floats in the water, mind also floats in the sea of sense objects. Mind always moves from one sense object to the other and due to its constant movement it looses its powers. So far the channelization of mental powers, according to the *Tantra,* mind should be a entraped by the net of *Sādhanā*[1]

---

[1] *Manasā caindriyagaṇaṁ Saṁyamyātmani yojayet* | Taken from Tantramahāvijñāna (Hindi), Sharma, Sri Rāma, p. 261.

The another subtle meaning of *Matsya* is *Prāṇa* or vital force. *Vāyu* (air) is the gross form of it. As has been explained in the *Haṭhayoga pradīpikā,* mind and *prāṇa* follow one another. By controlling the one, another can automatically be controlled.[1] So here like mind, *Prāṇa* is also considered as fish. But how *Tantra* considers *Prāṇa* as fish one may wish to know.

According to the *Tantra,* though *Prāṇa* pervades in the entire body; we breath, which is the gross form of *Prāṇa* through right and left nostrils which in terms of *Tantra* known as *Piṅglā,* the sun and *Idā,* the moon respectively. In the *Yogic* terms, life span depends upon the amount of *Prāṇa* consumed through respiration. The more amount of it we utilize, we can enjoy more life or longevity. *Prāṇa* floats either in *Pinglā* or in *Idā* which we feel it in the form of respiration. So to minimize the amount of respiration or in other words to enjoy longevity one has to control the *Prāṇa,* which moves like a fish in *Idā* and *Pinglā.*

From this we can conclusively say that the Tāntric meaning of *Matsya* is totally different from the gross one.

iv. *Mudrā*--(hand-postures)

Mudrā means *grain* or cooked food. The root verb of *Mudrā* is *Mud* means to please.[2] We eat food for the sustenance of life without which our body can not persist. Food nourishes body and with the result body becomes healthy and with healthy body, we enjoy all pleasures.

---

[1] *Cale Vāte calaṁ cittaṁ niścalaṁ bhavet*। *The Haṭhayoga pradīpikā* 2.2. Translated into English by Sinh, Pancham, p. 13. Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, 1975.

[2] *Mudaṁ Kurvanti devānāṁ manāṁsi drāvayanti ca*।
Tasmānmudrā iti khyātā darśitavyāḥ Kuleśvari।।
The Kulārṇavatantra 17-57.

Tantra has not taken only the gross meaning of *Mudrā*. According to it, in the realm of *Sādhanā*, the spiritual body of a *Sādhaka* should be strengthened by the spiritual food like *Jñāna Vairagya, Tapa* etc. The *Tantratattavaprakāśa* has mentioned eight types of *Mudrā* or grain like desire, greed, anger, greed anger, lust etc., which should be cooked or sublimated into the fire of Brahman.[1] This is the real food of *Sādhaka* by which he sustains his spiritual life. So this is the *Tāntric* meaning of *Mudrā*.

Mudrā also is a part of *Tantrasādhanā* and there it is a means for identifying spiritually various parts of the body with cosmic force or energy. So in *Tantra, Mudrā* is not merely a cooked food but it also contains spiritual life. So this is the *Tāntric* meaning of *Mudrā*.

Mudrā also is a part of *Tantrasādhanā* and there it is a means for identifying spiritually various parts of the body with cosmic force or energy. So in *Tantra, Mudrā* is not merely a cooked food but it also contains spiritual meaning.

v. *Maithuna*--Copulation:

Maithuna indicates copulation. Copulation is a union of male and female; the opposite poles required to be brought together for the purpose of creation by nature.

---

[1] *Āśātruṣṇājugupsābhayaviśadaghṛṇāmānalajjā prakopāḥ*। *Brahmāgnavaṣṭamudrāḥ parasukrutijanaḥ pacyamānāḥ samantāt/ Tantramahāvijñāna*, Sri Rāma Sharma, p. 264, Part I *(Hindi), Saṁskṛti Saṁsthāna, Baraeli.*

Tantra has presented the subtle meaning of creation, that is, spiritual creation for which two opposite poles are required. These two poles are *Śiva* and *Sakti*. Siva resides at the *Sahasrāra* (brain) while *Śakti* at the *Mūlādhāracakra* (pelvic region). In between these two there are six centres of energy around the spinal cord. The energy which resides at the *Mūlādhāracakra* awakens and penetrates all the centres and unites with *Siva* at the *Sahasrāracakra*. This is the real *Tāntric Maithuna* or copulation which occurs in the *Sādhaka*.[1]

So it is not a gross *Maithuna* or copulation taking place between two physical bodies but it is a spiritual communion with Śiva and Śakti which gives birth or transforms the whole personality of a *Sādhaka*.

With the help of *Tāntric* treatise, we have tried to see the correct meaning of *Tantra* symbols. Tāntric way of *Sādhanā* is so effective which gives quick results. So to avoid misuse of it, this system is armoured in the symbolic terminology. So symbols are designed to maintain its secrecy. But due to lack of its proper knowledge, a distortion takes place into the *Tantra* system.

We could see from the description, of the symbol that there is a World-wide difference between a gross meaning and a *Tāntric* meaning. The symbols like *liṅga, Ardhanārīśvara, Maithuna* etc. are largely distorted because of their relevance with

---

1. *Parāśaktyātma maithunaṁ saṁyogānanda nirbharaḥ* I The *Kulārṇavatantra* 5-112.

sex notion. We consider sex as a cause of degeneration but as the *Kulārṇava* says that which brings about degeneration can as well be a means for sublimation.[1] Thus the subtle meaning of symbol is enough to decide its soundness.

Body is the only means for achieving any goal. Disease proves to be obstacle in the path of gaining the goal. *Tantra* is a *Sādhanā* system. In the way of *Sādhanā, Sādhaka* has to face many physical disorders and mental disturbances. *Tantra* has not over looked this fact. To come out from this, it has mentioned certain processes which are designed for strengthening body-mind-complex and thereby fortifying the instrument for achieving all goals physical as well as Supra physical.

The very definition of *Tantra* reflects its therapeutic aspect. As we have seen, one of the meaning of *Tantra* according to the Śabdakalpadruma is medicine (*ouṣadhi*). The other meaning *liberation* is also deal with this aspect. It liberates *Sādhaka* from the physical and mental ailments. How *Tantra* does this that we have already indicated as and when we have found an opportunity. Still however by way of stating the investigations we have found clearly, we would like to recapitulate briefly there as follows:

Tantra does this by two ways: One by the cultivation of strong will power and second, by the utilization of *pārad* or mercury and its preparations.

As has been accepted, generally everybody has got its own medicine that is, its power of inbuilt resistance against attacks from diseases. This can be further cultivated by the cultivation of strong willpower. From the principles of *Tantra* we could see that, *Tantrasādhanā* is nothing but the awakening of inner powers of senses, body and mind. Willpower is the key of all powers. With the cultivation of it, one can open doors to the other latent powers. The power of resistance against disease is also included within it.

---

[1] *Yaireva patanaṁ dravyaiḥ Siddhihitaiḥ eva coditā*/ Ibid. 5-48.

Tantra also does this same job by the utilization of mercury (*pārada*) and its preparations. Mercury is considered as highly medicinal metal. But it can not be used in a natural form because of its poisonous nature. *Tāntric* seers have found out this fact five thousand years back and also worked out the process (*Saṁskāra*) to make mercury fit for medicinal use.

Lord Śiva is considered as the originator of this process of alchemy who is also the revealer of Tantra. With the help of these two only a *Haṭha yogi* or a *Tāntric Sādhaka* survived on the snowy summits of mountains without having any antibiotic drugs. This is but the physical side of *Tāntric* way of dealing with bodily ailments. We now turn to its mental side.

Symbol and their therapeutic value:

As is the case with *Pārada* or mercury in strengthening body so also, *Tantra* has a distinct medicine for mental ailments. And it is surprising to note that *Tantra* uses psychological symbols or *linguistical alphabets* as symbols for curing the mental diseases by cultivating inner potent mental powers.

Symbols are also highly significant in this regards in lying stress on mental aspect. Mind plays prominent role in mental and physical diseases. Mental disturbances are expressed sometimes in a physical disorders or physical disturbance sometimes makes mind weak. Thus all our diseases are *psycho-somatic*. Being a subtler than body, mind's effect on body is felt more powerful. *Tantra* has recognized this fact much earlier than we started talking about *psycho-somatic* aspect of diseases.

The *Tāntrics* prescribe the use of symbol for making mind calm and positive by concentrating it on syllables or figures of particular types. It is undisturbed and concentrated mind which is a source of creative imagination or all the creativity of mind. *Tāntrikasādhanā* is based on imagination. *Sādhaka* has to positively think that he is offering this or that object. This positive thinking also helps as therapy if the mind is diseased. The theory of auto-suggestion in psychology is highly related with this aspect. In the process of auto-suggestion patient gives strong suggestion or he imagines himself quite healthy very powerfully. This process gives relief to patient and gradually helps in curing himself from diseases. *Tāntrikasādhanā* through symbols strengthens the positive powers of imaginations which *Sādhaka* can utilize as a therapy for himself and also can be used as therapeutic means for curing others.

B. Awakening of the Kuṇḍalinīśakti:

In this age of science, security of a living being is a burning problem. Man has controlled almost all properties of the nature and even then we are always in *danger*. Why is it so? What is that small loose screw that brings about the whole mechanism of the world into a critical condition?

It is nothing but the imbalance or disharmony between body-mind, intellect-emotion in man. We are running madly after the materialism. The unfulfilled desires create imbalance between intellect and emotion in man which leads one to behave in unnatural way.

Technology has found out those types of weapons through which most of the part of the world can be demolished within a short time. If the possessors of these weapons do not think moderately (Moderation also comes from harmony between intellect and emotion) then it will prove to be dangerous for the whole of humanity.

This latent *volcano of nuclear power* can burst out at any time. It is an energy which can be used either for constructive or destructive purposes and this sheerly depends on one's mental tendency.

Like atom, our body also is on the foundation of energy which is rather more powerful than nuclear power which in *Tantra terminology* is known as the *Kuṇḍalinīśakti*. This energy is an universal energy and it is generally considered at latent and requires to be awakened. Awakening of it, is the goal of *Tantrasādhanā*.

Energy as an ultimate Reality of universe is a meta-physical doctrine underlying *Tantra* system. This mea-physical doctrine has also been accepted by science. Till now, this concept was considered as purely spiritual but now it has entered into the territory of science. Now the time has ripened for the working out compromise of spiritualism and scientific materialism. Spiritualism has to come down from the solitude of the summit of a mountain and has to settle its status in the midst of layman. At the same time, science also has to expand the narrow limits it has imposed upon and has to accept that which is not observable.

This universal energy resides in a body in the form of *Kuṇḍala* (Coil) hence it is known as *Kuṇḍalinī*. The awakening has to follow certain rules and regulations. He has to keep his body-mind pure and perfect with the help of *Nyāsa, Mudrās, Haṭhayogic* techniques etc. Moreover, *guru* also has to keep constant attention on each and every step of the progress of *sādhaka*.

Which are the theoretical and practical basis of the Kuṇḍaliī yoga and how the awakened power can be applied in a modern world? Now we shall see these possible questions in the section which follows.

a. Theoretical aspect : Kuṇḍalinīyoga

The term *Kuṇḍalinī* comes from the term *Kuṇḍala* means *coiled*. The universal energy, though it is potent lies latent at the end of the spinal cord in a centre known as *Mūlādhāracakra*, in a coiled form like a serpent, hence it is known as *Kuṇḍalinī*.

As has been accepted by science, only one-tenth of our mind is active while nine-tenth of its dormant. Our present development is the result of that one-tenth awakened part. In course of time slowly but steadily we cultivate our powers but the *Kuṇḍalinīyoga* process enhances this cultivation as it deal with the expansion of inner latent powers.

The theoretical basis of this Yoga is identification, based upon the principle of microcosm and macrocosm, i.e. all that is contained in the universe is also present in man. Man, therefore, is a miniature universe. At first, this principle seems to be a caprice or merely an idea of a fertile mind, but when we go into deeper and deeper it proves to be most creative and fertile principle.

There is one and the same universal consciousness in minerals and man. These two differ only in expression of the levels of consciousness. In minerals, it is less expressed and hence it looks as gross while in man, it expresses in more degrees than in minerals, and hence, it seems living or conscious. The present state of development of man is a result of a series of transformation or cultivation of consciousness. The previous stages of man are located in amoeba, from amoeba to fish, fish to ape and ape to man. This shows that the later transformation is superior to the former one. The process of cultivation of consciousness adds one more possibility in the series of transformation that is from man to super man. *Trantra* leads us to this way through awakening the *Kuṇḍalinīśakti*. Unconsciously, we are on that way of transformation but a *Tāntrikasādhaka* does this with full awareness and does it speedily. With the awakening of latent individual consciousness, *sādhaka* gets identification with the universal consciousness of which he is a part and parcel.

But how this identification between microcosm and macrocosm takes place? Like other systems, *Tantra* has also accepted that the root of the universe is ultimate *Reality* which is one without second. This *Reality* for *Tantra* is either Śiva or Śakti manifests Hereself in the planes of consciousness or *lokas*. These planes of consciousness are not one and the same but they differ by the degrees of density of matter out of which they are composed. It means we can say briefly that the creation manifests in increasing degrees of density or complexity. This process starts from the most subtle element and culminates in the creation of gross worlds, that is pṛthvī etc. which composed of extremely dense matter.

The above mentioned process of creation taking place in macrocosm, also takes place in the microcosm simultaneously. Like universe, our body is also made out of five gross elements with their essences, that is *Tanmātra*, are located at certain points on the body namely skull, throat, heart etc. These points are in *Tantra* terms known as centres or *cakras*.

These *cakras* or the centres of consciousness are like powerhouse from which each and every cell gets its power. But how does this *power* flow? This power flows through the medium of *Nāḍi* or veins which are subtle in nature. Through Nādi, life currents flows and vitalize the body. According to the Tāntric treatise, there are 72,000 *Nāḍis* in body. Among them fourteen are important. Three among fourteen are the prime one, they are namely. *Iḍa*, *Piṅgalā* and *Suṣumṇā*. Among these three, *Suṣumṇā* is the most significant.

Centres are seven in number. Though there is a controversy about the number of centres. For some it is nine while seven is generally accepted. These *cakras* are namely *Mūlādhāra* cakra, *Swādhiṣṭhānacakra*, *Maṇipuracakra*, Anāhata cakra, *Viśuddhacakra*, *Ājñācakra* and *Sahasrāra* cakra. Their corresponding areas in physical body namely, *sacrocoaygeal* plexus, cardiac plexus, throat, eye-brows and skull region respectively.

The seventh centre, that is, *Sahasrāra* where the manifestation of consciousness is at the highest level, is considered in *Tantra* as the abode of Śakti. The place of centres and Nādis, is in *Tantrasādhanā* very significant.

Now let us come to the original point, that is, identification between the microcosm and macrocosm. As mount *Meru* is considered as the axis of universe, likewise, spinal cord is considered as the base of physical body. Because both universe and body has been made out of five gross elements. The predominance of five elements is felt at different centres of *cakras*. This five gross elements, *Pṛthvi*, *Ap*, *Teja*, *Vāyu* and *Ākāśa* with their respective *Tanmātras* namely *Gandha*, *Rasa*, Rupa, *Sparśa*, *Śabda* are felt on the *Mūlādhāra*, *Swādhiṣṭhāna*, *Maṇipura*, *Anāhata*, *Viśuddha*, respectively.

Energy is the support or base of universe. The universal energy, that is, *Kuṇḍalinī* also rests coiled at the *Mūlādhāracakra*, at the end of the spinal cord. This is the point, which in *Tantra* terms is known as *kāṇḍa* from which all 72,000 *Nāḍis* spring and spread out in the whole body. The sympathetic channel, the *para*-sympathetic channel and the spinal cord has a great resemblance with the *Idā*, *Piṅgalā* and *Suṣumṇā Nāḍis*. The mental and vital currents flow into these *Idā* and *Piṇgalā nādi* respectively. There are also two subtle *nāḍis* namely *Vajrā* and *Citrinī* in the *Suṣumṇā* Nādi.

The *Mūlādhāracakra* is the meeting place of all these channels. There is also an upward base triangle in the centre, inside it there is a Svayambhū *liṅga* on which the coiled *Kuṇdalin*ī rests.

The latent *Kuṇdalinī* can be awakened through various *Haṭhayagic* practices and Tantra techniques. The awakened *Kuṇḍalinī* pierces centres one by one and ultimately reaches to the *Sahasrāracakra*. In its upward journey and union between Śiva who resides in the *Sahasrāra* and *Śakti* takes place in the Sahasrāra cakra.

Sahajayoga is the synonym of the *Kuṇḍalinī yoga*. In the ascendance of the *Kuṇḍalinī* while piercing all centres, *she* absorbs all elemental forces which are ascribed to the centres. At the *Sahasrāra* centre, *she* absorbs herself in Śiva. A cosmic intercourse takes place in that centre. There issues nectar from Śiva. *Kuṇḍalinī* drinks this nectar and comes back to *Her* own place, that is the *Mūlādhāra* cakra. In her journey towards descent, it revitalizes all the centres with the *ambrosia* and ultimately goes to her original abiding place i.e. the *Mūlādhāra*. This process of *Sakti* going upward and coming down after till a stage come when she rests permanently with Śiva in *Sahasrāra* and decent movement stops once for all. This depends upon the itensity of *sādhanā* and competency of *sādhaka*.

It is said that when man awakes for worldly affairs, *Kuṇḍalinī* sleeps. But when *Kuṇḍalinī* awakes, man sleeps for worldly affairs. It means the power he gets from the awakening of *Kuṇḍalinī*, expands the horizons of his ordinary limitations attached with his ego. *His* self gets expanded to its capacity with the result that the power he gets from the awakening of *Kuṇḍalinī*, he does not utilize for his personal pleasures but for the whole humanity. It is useless to sit, on the solitude of mountain after liberation as some *Yogis* do. But the real *Tantric sādhaka* uses his powers not only for the satisfaction of his mundane pleasures but for the liberation of whole humanity. Lord Buddha after enlightment posed a question as to how he differs from ordinary person, who pursues wealth or fame or worldly pleasures if he enjoys his realization himself alone. And then he decides to share his pleasures of self-realization among all people.

How the *Ṣaṭcakrabhedana* takes place, we shall see under the title *applied side of Kuṇḍalinī yoga*.

b. Applied side of the *Kuṇḍalinīyoga* :

The term *Kuṇḍalinī yoga* is a compound of two terms namely, *Kuṇḍalinī* and *Yoga*. We know the meaning and significance of *Kuṇḍalinī*. *Yoga* means union. Here the term *yoga* does not denote merely *union* but it also represents the process which leads to union.

Realization or identification with the *Higher Reality* is the goal of the *Kuṇḍalinīyoga*. This goal also can be achieved through the *Rājayoga*, *Mantra yoga*, *Haṭhayoga* etc. The goal is the same but they differ only in the way of approaching the goal.

The *Rājayoga* accepts the aid of intellect for reaching the goal while *Mantrayoga* does this by the instrument like words. The *Haṭhayoga* is mainly concerned with the physical body. They believe in the interdependent relationship of physical body and the subtle body in which centres of consciousness are situated. So the application on the gross body affects the subtle body. The Haṭhayoga does this by the application of *Mudrās---Prāṇāyāma* etc.

The *Kuṇḍalinīyoga* deals with the seat or centres of consciousness. *Centres* and *Nāḍis* are located in the subtle body or the *Prāṇāyāmaśarīa*. According to the *Tantra,* among 72,000 *Nāḍis,* which are spread throughout the body, only fourteen *Nāḍis* are important. And among fourteen only three namely *Idā, Piṅgalā* and *Suṣumṇā* on the left and the right side of it respectively. The root of all *Nāḍis* which in *Tantra* terms is known as Kanda is in the *Mūlādhāracakra*. The *Kuṇḍalinī śakti* lies dormant at the end of the *Suṣumṇā* channel. How to awaken this sleeping *Kuṇḍalinī,* we shall see it now.

Tantra has worked out this process thousands of years back. Though this process is a difficult task but it gives everlasting eternal joy to *sādhaka*. The pre-requirement of this process of awakening the *Kuṇḍalinī,* is the guicdance of an expert teacher who should be well versed in this type of practice who can efficiently guide in this process till it comes to its natural fruition. The objective of this process is to achieve purity of physical body-mind complex. And hence the second pre- requisite is firm determination or strong will power.

As we have seen in the theoretical aspect, *Kuṇḍalinī* sleeps dormant at the base of the *Suṣumṇānāḍi*. So the door of this *Nāḍi* should be opened otherwise the aroused power is likely to pass either in the Idā or in the *Pīṅgalānādi.*

There are various processes for awakening the power mentioned by the different *Tantra* treatise. Here we shall see this process in the words of Arthur Avalon. In the words of Arthur Avalon, *The sādhaka sits in a prescribed Āsana and steadies the mind by concentrating between the eyebrows. Air is inhaled and retained; the upper part of the body is contracted and the Prāṇa (upward breath) is checked. The air thus prevented from going upward tends to rush downward; this escape of Vāyu as Āpāna is also checked by appropriate contraction of the lower parts. The vāyu thus collected is directed towards the Mūlādhāra centre and the mind and will are concentrated upon it with the result that due to the frictional pressure of Prāna and Apāna held tight together, intense heat is generated and this again arouses the sleeping serpent, Kuṇḍalinī, which when so activated is drawn upwards. By mental concentration with aid of Mantra, the Jīvātma which of the sape of a flame is brought down from the heart to the Mūlādhāra and, so to say, united and moved along with awakened Śakti. As its coils are lossened, the aperture to the door of Brahman, Brahmadvāra, at the mouth of the Suṣumṇā, is opened and through the Citriṇīnāḍi within the Kuṇḍalinī is led upward.*[1]

After pierecing the *Mūlādhāracakra,* with the aid of the concentration, *Kuṇḍalinī* goes upward and pierces all centres and unites with *Śiva* at the *Sahasrāra* centre. The significant point, here, is that in the ascending journey. She absorbs all the gross elements ascribed on the centres and baths in the *ambrosia* issues by Śiva in the *Sahasrāracakra*. In return journey *She* revitalizes all centres and comes back to the *Mūlādhāracakra,* her abiding place. This process should be repeated again and again.

---

[1] Avalon, Arthur: *The Serpent Power*, p. 459, Published by Ganesh and Co.

The return journey of *Kuṇḍalinī* invokes various centres on its way to *Mūlādhāra* and endows the *sādhaka* with the following qualities.

When it attains to *Sahasrāra* on its upward journey, *sādhaka* becomes completely liberated from the limitations of body-mind and space around. In the return journey while passing through the *Ājñācakra* endows the *sādhaka* with the quality of success of words, means whatever he speaks turn out to be ultimately true. It confers the *Vāksiddhi*.

When it passes to *viśuddhacakra, sādhaka* endows with a unique types of oration which whence he utters, keeps the hearer spell-bound. When it passes through *Anāhatacakra,* it confers unique power of discrimination by which *sādhaka* comes to know what is good and what is bad or what is eternal and what is non-eternal. When it comes to the *Maṇipūracakra, sādhaka* is endowed with the knowledge of various *vidyās* or abilities without being tought. When it passes through the *swādhiṣṭhānacakra, sādhaka* is endowed with poetic sense and the subtle techniques of *yoga*. When it comes to the *Mūlādhāracakra, sādhaka* enjoys health. These *siddhis* are again a criteria to what an extant the *sādhaka* has been able to penetrate various *cakras*.

These are the powers which normally do not manifest in a layman. It manifests only after piercing one after the other centres. At the end of this process, *sādhaka* gets totally transformed. He feels the presence of the supernatural energy or *śakti* within himself.

C. Therapeutic application of the various aspects of *Kuṇḍalinīśakti:*

Hitherto we have been discussing about the theoretical and applied side of the *Kuṇḍalinīyoga.* Awakening of the inner potentialities is not an easy process. The *Tāntric* way of awakening is very effective because it deals directly with the mental aspect. It is purely a psychological process. This fact also can be seen in the *Tāntric* process of worship or *sādhanā.* In the essentials of *Tanatra,* we could see that the worship of deity should be done mentally (*Bhāvayet, Kalpayet*) and it is considered as the highest form of worship.

It is said that the process of *sādhanā* gives some supernormal powers to *sādhaka.* What is the use of these powers if suppose the *sādhaka* sits idly in solitude on the peaks of the mountains? How these powers can be applied in day to day life? A layman is least concerned with whether *Kuṇḍalinī* is there or not. He is always in search of those aids through which he can get relief from the pain resulting from the complexities of life. Physical disorders and mental ailments are the unavoidable aspects of life which add to the complexity in life. Is there any Tāntric way through which the process of awakening of Kuṇḍalinī can be utilized to come over the evils of life?

Yes, from the description of *Tantra* centres and *Nāḍis* we can work out one hypothesis which is related with the therapeutic aspect which runs as follows:

The awakened *Kuṇḍalinī* can be classified according to its various aspects of manifestation. They are namely *Kriyāvatī, Varṇamayī, Kalātmikā* and *Vedhamayī.*[1]

Mani0festation on the plane of physical body, which is related with the *Haṭhayoga,* is known as the *Kriyāvatī* aspect of the *Kuṇḍalinīśakti*. On this stage, *sādhaka* does manifold exercises automatically under the influence of new awakened power. The *Haṭhayogic* exercise directly affects the spinal column of *sādhaka* not in a destructive manner but their effect on system gives health to him.

The second aspect is *Kalāvatī*. Etymologically, *Kalā* means *phase*. It may be a phase of time of moon etc. *Kuṇḍalinī* is a fiery energy. It's phase of flame in body takes the form of bile or *pitta*. The place of bile in body is very significant. All roots of diseases are located in the of the imlalance fire of the stomach or *jaṭharāgni*. The taken food is consumed by the fire at the navel region. Aroused power of *Kuṇḍalinī* strengthens this fiering capacity of the bile or *pittakalā* which ultimately results into healthy body.

The *Vedhamayī* aspect is the highest manifestation of *Kuṇḍalinīśakti* which covers all these three aspects. This aspect deals with the piercing of centres. *Bhūtajaya* or the complete control over bodily constituents is the result of this aspect. *Sādhaka* can change the proportion of bodily constituents according to his will, so that he can himself establish a harmony between five elements which is the pre-requirement of good health which is the root of the prosperity and peace.

---

[1] *Caturvidyā sā sandiṣṭā kriyāvatyādi bhedataḥ* I
Kriyāvatī Varṇamayī Kalatmā Vedhamayī. I I
Taken from *Devatmashakti* (Divine Power) by Swami Vishnutirth, p. 115, Published by Shankarlalji Bhatnagar, 1949.

● ● ●

CHAPTER-X

Tāntric Worship with the *Makāras*

To the general people, *Tantra* and the followers of *Tantra* are objects of both dislike and fear. Some occult practices called *abhicāras*, which have little relation with religion, and also some religious practices pursued by the *Tāntrikas* are responsible for this. Of the religious practices of *Tantra*, the *ma-kāra-sādhanās* or practices with the *makāras*, in particular, have been subjected to serious criticism.

These *makāras* are five in number, namely, *madya* or wine, *māṁsa* or meat, *matsya* or fish, *mudrā* or cooked rice and vegetable and *maithuna* or sex-relation.[1] These are called *ma-kāras*, because all the words denoting these objects have *ma-kāra* or the sound *m* in the beginning. And *ma-kāra-sādhanās* are those religious practices that are pursued by the *Tāntrikas* with the help of these *ma-kāras* objects. Of the five *makāras*, *mudrā* is described by none as an object of fear or dislike or as opposed to religion, because the objects coming under *mudrā* are not at all harmful to our moral life and are used by all of us in our day-to-day life. But the other four *ma-kāras* are seriously criticised by all the scriptures of *Hinduism* including *Buddhism*, Jainism and Sikhism, and also by the people in general as directly opposed to religion and ethics.

---

[1] *madyaṁ māṁsaṁ tathā matsyaṁ mudrā maithunam eva ca* I 5. 22; see also *Muṇḍamālā-tantra*, 2, 59.

Of course, scriptures like the *Manu-smṛti* and the like have prescribed fish and meat as food, but these prescriptions are meant for the people of low grade who have no idea about the higher and purer plane of spiritual life. This is clear from the fact that, while giving his final assessment, Manu has declared non-eating of fish and meat as the *uttama* or the highest form of practice, and has advised the spiritual aspirants to abandon the practice of eating fish and meat.[1] Likewise, drinking of wine has also been allowed to the people of lower rank, and sex-relation has been prescribed for the house-holders, though at the end, the abandonment of these habits has been eulogised as giving great fruits.[2] This means that these four *ma-kāras* are treated as opposed to religious or spiritual life. Under these circumstances, a question naturally arises in our mind as to why these things have been declared in *Tantra* as means for spiritual uplift.

In some authoritative scriptures, it is held that the terms *madya, māṁsa* etc. found in the *Tāntric* prescriptions do not, in reality, mean wine, fish etc. with which we are acquainted. These terms

---

1. *Tasmān matsyāṁ vivarjayet* I - *Manu-saṁhitā*, 5. 15; *Nivarteta sarvamāṅsasya bhaksanāt* I - *ibid*, 5. 48.
2. *Na māṁsa-bhakṣaṇe doṣo na madye na ca maithune* I. *Pravṛttireṣā bhūtānām nivṛttistu mahāphalā* I I *ibid*, 5. 56.

are here said to be used in *technical* senses to denote different steps or stages in the path of spiritual progress and realisation. Thus, in the *Tāntric* scriptures, we find the explanations of the *ma-kāras* in different ways as follows :

(1) The practice of drinking *madya* or wine means the practice of tasting the flow of nectar oozing from the *tālu* or *Brahmarandhra* situated at the top of the spinal cord. *Māṁsa* means speech (*mā*=tongue, *aṁśa*=speech) and,. hence, the practice of eating *māṁsa* means speech-control. *Matsya* means *śvāsa*, the outgoing breath, and *praśvāsa*, the ingoing breath, or the two forms of air lying in the nerves called *Gaṅgā* i.e. *iḍā* and *Yamunā* i.e. *piṅgalā*. Hence, the practice of eating *matsya* means *prāṇāyāma* i.e. breath-control or aircontrol. The practice of eating *mudrā* means digesting the sentiments of desire, fear, hatred, vanity, shame etc., by boiling them by the fire of knowledge. *Maithuna* means union between *Brahman* and the individual self. (2) *Madya* means bliss derived from the enjoyment of *Brahman* through the practice of *Yoga*. *Māṁsa* means the dedication of all actions to *Brahman*. *Matsya* means feeling the joys and sorrows of all beings as one's own joys and sorrows. *Mudrā* means giving up the company of evil persons. *Maithuna* means union of the self with Śiva, the *Highest*.[1] (3) *Madya* means absorption in

---

[1] *Soma-dhārā kṣared yā tu brahma-randhrād varānane* ।
Pītvānandamayīm tām yaḥ sa eva madya-sevakaḥ ।।
Mā-śabdād rasanā jñeyā tad-aṁśān rasanā priye ।
Sadā yo bhakṣayed devi sa eva māṁsaśādhakaḥ ।।
Gaṅgā-yamunayor madhye matsyau dvau carataḥ sadā ।
Tau matsyau bhakṣayed yas tu sa bhaven matsya-sādhakaḥ ।।

the meditation of *Brahman* and in the bliss arising from such meditation. *Māṁsa* means absorption in the meditation of *Brahman* through the destruction of merits *(Puṅya)*, demerits *(pāpa)*, anger etc. *Matsya* means sense-control and absorption in the meditation of the self. *Mudrā* means *boiling* or destroying desire, greed etc. *Maithuna* means absorption in *Brahman.*[1] (4) *Madya* giving rise to happiness and misery stands for *rakta* or blood. *Mudrā* or vegetable forming the foundation of all the living beings symbolises the earth. *Maithuna,* the root of multiplicity, represents *vyoman* of space. Hence the practice of the five *ma-kāras* means divinisation of all these elements and dedication of the same to the Lord.[2] (5) *Madya* means testing the flow of

---

Āśātṛṣṇājugupsā-bhayaviṣādaghṛṇāmānalajjābhi-
ṣaṅgaāh |
Brahmāgnav-aṣṭa mudrāḥ parā sukṛtir naḥ japācyamānaḥ
samastāt | |
Tadā jāto mahānando brahma-jñānār sudurlabham |
Ātmani ramate yasmād ātmārāmas tad-ucyate-
Āgamasāra | |

[1] *Yad-uktaṁ paramaṁ brahma nirvikāraṁ nīrañjanam |*
Tasmin pramadana-jñānaṁ tan madyaṁ parikrititam | |
Evaṁ māṁ sanoti hi yat karma tan māṁsam parikīrtitam |
Matsyamānaṁ sarva-bhūte sukḥa-duḥkham idam priye |
Asat-saṅga-mudraṇaṁ yat tan mudrā parikīrtitā | |
Kula-kuṇḍalinī śaktir dehinām dehadhārinī |
Tayā śivasya sadryogo maithunaṁ parikīrtitam | |
quoted by Svami Nigamananda, Tāntrik Guru, pp.18-9.

[2] *Vyoma-paṅkaja-niṣyanda-sudhā-pāna-rato naraḥ |*
sudhā-pānam imaṁ proktam itare madya-pāyinaḥ | |
Puṇyāpuṇya-paśum hatvā jñāna-khaḍgeṇa yogavit |
Parė layaṁ nayec cittaṁ palāsī sa nigadyate | |
Manasā cendriya-gaṇam saṁyamyātmani yojayet |
matsyāśī sa bhaved devi...parā-śakty-ātma-

supreme nectar ozing from *bindu* (which lies in the lotus of *sahasrāra* at the top of the spinal cord and functions as the root of all manifestations) as a result of the union between the *Kuṇḍdalinī-power* and *bindu*. *Māṁsa* means destroying merits (*puṇya*) and demerits (*pāpa*)-symbolised by the animal to be sacrificed-and offering the heart represented by *māṁsa*-to the Lord. *Matsya* means controlling the senses and bringing the individual self in contact with the *Supreme Self*.[1]

Here the question is : if the said words are really used in their technical senses to symbolise spiritual practices of different grades, as presented above, why have the *Tāntrikas* chosen these words which in their general usage carry the meanings of undesirable things and thereby arouse doubts and disrespect in the minds of people? To this, some say that these words have been used to attract the ordinary people or people of low grade who are addicted to such things. But this interpretation cannot be accepted on the following grounds : (1) First, it is not possible to attract the ordinary people simply by uttering a few words denoting things of allurement. To attract the ordinary people, those things must actually be offered to them for their enjoyment. (2) Secondly, in the *Tāntric* scriptures, detailed descriptions of the makāras are found as follows : *Uttamamadya* or *madya* of high quality can be produced from

---

Mithuna-sadryogānandanirbharaḥ/
ya āste maithunaṁ tat syād apare strī-niṣevakaḥ
kulārṇavatantra, 8. 108-112.

1. See *Mahānirvāṇatantra*, 8.103-111.

molasses, sesamum and honey. *Māṁsa* or *meat* can be acquired from the three types of animals living in water land and air. Amongst *matsyas* or fishes, *ṇāla, bodāla* and *rohita* are the best ones, *Śāli*-rice-white like the moon-beams when cooked or baked with *ghee* becomes suitable to be used as *mudrā*.[1] Flowers are also worthy of being used as *mudrā*. In the case of the practice of maithuna, *sādhak's* own wife is declared to be the best associate.[2] All these descriptions have clear references to the corresponding material things we are acquainted with. It is neither possible nor desirable to give symbolic or spiritual interpretations to all these terms. (3) Thirdly, the five *ma-kāras* in their director popular senses are seen to be used not only by the ordinary *sādhakas* but also by *sādhakas* of high rate, in the pursuit of spiritual life. Great *sādhakas* like *Bāmākṣepā* and others used to take wine, meat etc. in their spiritual practices, Sri P.K. Chattopadhayay in his *Tantrābhilāsir Sādhusaṅga* informs us how great *Tāntrikas* having super-sensuous experiences also used to practise with the five *makāras*. An event described in this work will suffice the position : In the dark night of a new-moon day, a number of *Tāntrikas*, each having his female associate with him, assembled in a lonely cemetery, sat in a circular way, consumed sufficient meat and wine along with their female associates and practised for the whole night. In this assembly, the *cakreśvara* or the head of the circle and the *bhairavī*, his female associate, embraced each other in a naked position and attained *samādhi*, losing their external senses.[1] This description shows that even the *sādhakas* of high rate practise with the five *makāras* in their popular senses.

---

[1] *Sahasrāropari bindau kuṇḍayā melanaṁ śive* ।
Maithunaṁ śayanaṁ divyaṁ yatīnāṁ parikīrtitam ।।
Yoginītantra, 6, 41;
kuṇḍalyā milanād bindoḥ sravate yat parāmṛ-tam/
pibed yogī maheśāni satyaṁ satyaṁ varānane//
Yogini-Tantra.

[2] *Uttamāstridhā matṣyāḥ śāla-paṭhīna-rohitāḥ* ।
- *Mahānirvāṇatantra*, 6-8;
Māṁsaṁ trividhaṁ proktaṁ jala-bhūcara-khecaram । *ibid*, 6. 5; *Gauḍī paiṣṭī tathā mādhvī trividhā cottamā surā* । *-ibid*, 6. 2; *see also Kulārṇavatantra*, Ch. 5
Candra-bimba-nibhā śubhra śālī-taṇḍula-sambhavā ।
Yava-godhūmajā vāpi ghṛta-pakvamanoharā ।
quoted by Svami Nigamananda, op cit p.31.

Now, we are confronted with two problems: (1) First, if wine, meat etc. are really meant for spiritual practices, why have the *Tāntrikas* given the aforesaid symbolic or spiritual interpretations of the *ma-kāras* ? (2) Secondly, why did the great followers of *Tantra* like Ramakrishna and others not practice with the *ma-kāras* ?

In solving these problems, the *Tāntrikas* say that *sādhakas* or spiritual aspirants are divided into three types, according to three types of *bhāvas* or mental attitudes. The three types of *bhāvas* are : (a) *paśubhāva* or *Tāmasika-bhāva*-the animalistic attitude or the attitude of the quality of *tamas*, (b) *vīrabhāva* or the *rājasika-bhāva*-the heroic attitude or the attitude of the quality of *rajas*, and (c) *divyabhāva* or *sāttvikabhāva* - the divine attitude or the attitude of the quality of *sattva*.[1] Though these three *bhāvas* are sometimes described as three steps in the path of spiritual progress, it is more reasonable to regard them as three different ways of spiritual practice pursued by the *sādhakas*, a *sādhaka* of the *paśubhāva* is not entitled to practise with the *makāras* in their popular senses, since practices with the *ma-kāras* may bring downfall in his spiritual life. Hence, some *anukalpas* or substitutes for the *ma-kāras* are prescribed for this class of *sādhakās* as follows : The substitutes for *madya* are coconut-water, milk, honey, the juice of ginger mixed with molasses and so on. The substitutes for *māṁsa* are salt, ginger, sesamum, garlic and so on. The substitutes for *matsya* are red radish (*mūlaka*), brinjal, salt, ginger etc. The substitutes for *mudrā* are paddy, rice etc. The substitute for *maithuna* is offering of flower.[2] For the *sādhakas* of *divyabhāva* also, the five *makāras* are not prescribed, since the *sādhakas* of this class, being always absorbed in divine thoughts, consider it superfluous to practise with these external elements. The *sādhakas* of this class are advised to take only the symbolic or spiritual meanings of the *ma-kāras* as mentioned above. According to some, the external *ma-kāras* are prescribed for the *sādhakas* of *vīrbhāva* only, as it is the *sādhakas* of *vīrabhāva* only that try to attain spiritual enlightenment through confrontation with the natural tendencies of the mind-body. But for whom-so-ever the *ma-kāras* might be prescribed, a *sādhaka* is not allowed to practise with them according to his sweet will. A *sādhaka* may practise with the *makāras* only when the preceptor, considering the capability of the *sādhaka*, allows him to do so.

---

[1] *Svakīyā kevalā Śivā sarva-doṣa-vivarjitā* ।
Mahānirvāṇatantra, 6. 14.

---

[1] vide P.K. Chattopadhyay, *Tantrābhilāsīr Sādhusaṅga*, vol.I, pp.237-8.

[2] *Śakti-prādhānyād bhāvānāṁ trayāṇaṁ sādhakasya ca* I
Divya-vīra-paśūnām ca bhāva-trayam udāhṛtam I I
Rudrayāmala, quoted by Svami Nigamananda, op. cit. p.43.

In some *Tantras*, the five *ma-kāras* have been described as obligatory for all kinds of *sādhakas*. The *Mahānirvāṇa-tantra* says that without the practice of *ma-kāra*, a *sādhaka* cannot expect to make progress in his spiritual journey, as he is liable to be confronted with obstacles at every step of his journey. The *Mātṛkābhedatantra* says that without drinking *madya* or wine, no person can acquire the highest knowledge and that by drinking *madya* even the worst sinner can acquire real knowledge and attain liberation. A persen, it is said, attains *suratva* or godliness at the very moment of drinking *surā* or wine. Likewise, the *Kulārṇavatantra* and some other *Tantras* also say that the practice with the *ma-kāras* is essential for spiritual uplift.[1] In all these cases, however, the *ma-kāras* are to be accepted in their symbolic or spiritual senses, since the practice with the spiritual *ma-kāras* is obligatory for all. It is in the case of the *sādhakas* of *vīrabhāva* only that practice with the *ma-karas* in their direct or popular senses has been regarded as necessary. In reality in the case of the *sādhakas* of *virabhāva* also, practice with the external *ma-kāras* is not obligatory. The *sādhakas* of this class are simply allowed, and not compelled, to practise with the *ma-kāras*. This is known from the fact that there are numerous great *sādhakas* who did not practise like Ramakrishna described this way of spiritual practice as *a path full of rubbish.*[1] (1) It cannot, however, be denied that practice with the external *ma-kāras*-be it obligatory or optional - has been regarded in *Tantra* as a means for spiritual uplift.

---

[1] See *Yoginītantra*, Ch. 6, *Kulārṇavatantra*, Ch.5 and C.L. Gautam, *Tantra-mahāvijñāna*,pp.245-72.

Now, as said above, the non-*Tāntric* thinkers have always decried the *ma-kāras* as great evils, on the ground that they bring downfall in our ethical and spiritual life. Hence, the *Tāntric* prescription of these *makāras* as means for spiritual uplift naturaly evokes these questions : First, why have these anti-spiritual things been considered in *Tantra* as means for spiritual uplift ? Secondly, is it really possible to make progress in spiritual life with the help of these *ma-kāras* ?

In solving the first question, it will have to be noted that *Tantra* has never described the enjoyment of the *ma-kāras* as such to be the means for spiritual progress. *Tantra* has described the *ma-kāras* simply as sub-servient to the spiritual progress of a *sādhaka* who, having his aim fixed on spiritual enlightenment, undertakes the relevant practices whith the help of these *ma-kāras*. A person whose purpose is simply to eat fish and meat, to drink, wine, and to enjoy sexual pleasure can never be expected to make progress in the spiritual path.

---

[1] *Divyānāṁ caiva vīrāṇāṁ sādhanā bhava-sādhanam* । - *Muṇḍamālatantra*, 2. 59 ; *paśor na divya-vīrayoḥ* । - *Yoginītantra*, 6. 14; see C.L. Gautam, op. cit., vol.I, pp.250-72, and Brahmarṣi Satyadeb, *Pūjā-tattva*, pp.169-70.

If the enjoyment of these *ma-kāras* as such be regarded as means for spiritual progress or for the attainment of liberation then most of the people would be entitled to liberation without any endeavour. *Tantra* says that with the exception of a person eating *matsya* in its symbolic or spiritual sense all fish-eaters are to be regarded as fishermen committing violence against animals. Again, it is said thạt a person drinking wine simply for enjoyment is a great sinner, and that unbriddled enjoyment of the *ma-kāras* is not different from the enjoyment by the lower animals.[1] The *ma-kāras* are thus regarded as helping a *sādhaka* attain liberation or enlightenment, only when they are made use of according to scriptural injunctions and with proper self-control.

But the question still remains as to how these *ma-kāras,* which are diametrically opposed to spirituality, can help a *sādhaka* in his spiritual progress. In reply to this, we have to say that *sādhanā* or spiritual endeavour is of two kinds, namely, *nivṛtti-mārga* i.e. the path of renunciation and *pravṛttimārga* i.e. the path of enjoyment.[2]

---

[1] *Pañca-tattvaṁ vinā pūjā abhicārāya ka pate* I *Neṣṭa-siddhir bhavet tasya vighnāstasya pade pade* I I *Mahānirvāṇatantra*, 5, 23; *Kulācāraṁ vinā devi śakti-mantro na siddhidaḥ* I *ibid*, 5. 21; see also *Mātrkā-bhedatantra*, 3. 32, 3. 38 and 4. 9 and also *Kulārṇavatantra*, 7. 100. vide *Śri Śri Ramakrishna-kathāmṛta*, Reflect Publication, Calcutta, pp.236, 335, 952.

[2] Mādi-pañcakam īśāni devatā-prītaye sudhīḥ *Kulārṇavatantra*, 10. 6; *svecchayā paśuvat hānam paśu-pānam itīritam* I *Mahānirvāṇatantra*, 7. 95; see also *Kulārṇavatantra*, 2. 118-32 and 5. 110, and also *Nīla-tantra*, 9. 2-4 and *Meru-tantra*.

According to the first path, a *sādhaka* is required to fight directly against those mental and physical tendencies that are opposed to spiritual progress. Here the aspirant is to maintain rigorous self control through *abhyāsa* or practice and *vairāgya* or detachment and to destroy the tendencies of desire, lust, greed etc. to the root. And for this purpose he is to give up the enjoyment of all those things that are liable to arouse these mental tendencies. In the path of *pravṛtti*, on the other hand, a *sādhaka* is not to destroy the mental tendencies natural to human beings nor is he required to give up those things of enjoyment that are liable to arouse these tendencies. It is through *bhoga* or enjoyment, declare the *śāstras* of this path, that a *sādhaka* can attain *yoga*-enlightenment or liberation. But *bhoga* as such cannot lead a *sādhaka* to enlightenment or liberation. It is *bhoga* through the purification or divinisation of the natural human tendencies that can lead a *sādhaka* to spiritual enlightenment. This purification or divinisation is possible when the natural human tendencies are directed towards the Lord or the Mother. That means when the *sādhaka* enjoys anything, he is to think and realise that the object of his enjoyment is but a manifestation of the Lord or the Mother. Accordingly, a *sādhaka* is here allowed to enjoy all those things for which he has a natural attachment. What the *sādhaka* is required to practise is that he should think and realise the *bliss* derived from the enjoyment of those things to be the bliss of *Brahman* or the Mother. A *sādhaka* by a regular pursuance of this practice, can transport his mind to the divine land lying beyond the land of material enjoyment. It is therefore said in *Tantra* that a *sādhaka* can rise to the spiritual plane with the help of those things that are liable to bring downfall in the life of man.[1] The siginificance here is that, a *sādhaka* is to enjoy divine *bliss* in the very enjoyment of the worldly things, and thus try to detach his mind from the objects of worldly enjoyment. When a *sādhaka* is successful in this practrice, the whold world reappears to him as divine. This clearly shows that *Pravṛtti-mārga* is simply a step towards *Nivṛtti-mārga*. And it is this *Pravṛtti-marga* that is prescribed in *Tantra*. *Tantra* therefore says that in it *Pravṛtti* is transformed into *nivṛtti*, or rather, *bhoga* reappears as *Yoga*.[2] This path is meant particularly for those who lead a domestic life, and also for those who are not capable of practising rigorous self control.

It is now clear that the five *ma-kāras* are prescribed in *Tantra* from the view-point of *Pravṛtti-mārga*. Here that *sādhaka* is required to realise, at the time of enjoying the *makāras*, that the enjoymnet he gets is but a manifestation of the *bliss* of *Brahman*. In other words, he should enjoy *Brahmānanda* through the enjoyment of the worldly things. A point to be noted here is that all the enjoyments of the world originate, in reality, from *Brahmānanda*. The ordinary people cannot realise this because of ignorance and the resulting impurity of the mind, which impose limitations to their

---

1. *Pravṛttaṁ ca nivṛttaṁ ca dvividhaṁ karma vaidikam* I *Manu-saṁhitā*.
2. *Yair eva patanam dravyaiḥ siddhis tair eva coditā* I Kulārṇavatantra, 5. 48.

enjoyment of bliss. A *sādhaka* who, through proper practices, directs his mind towards the Supreme, can destroy this ignorance and the resulting impurity of the mind. As a result, the limitations imposed by ignorance and the impurity of the mind vanish and the unlimited divine bliss reveals itself. This is what is called *divinisation*. When a *sādhaka* is successful in divinising his natural human tendencies, he finds no difference between good and bad or between truth and falsity. To him, the so-called evil deed is revealed as a good deed; the untrue, as true; the undrinkable as drinkable; the uneatable, as eatable; and the unenjoyable, as enjoyable.[1] The practice with the *ma-kāras*, thus, shows the path of divinisation and teaches us how to infinitise out finite enjoyment.

In reply to the second question, we may say, from an analysis of the natural human tendencies, that it is certainly possible to rise to the plane of pure and divine bliss through worldly enjoyment. If we can enjoy worldly things as *Brahman*, our enjoyment becomes pure and deep, as a result of which our natural tendencies rise to a divine plane. The enjoyment of the beauty of a flower becomes purer and deeper, when that beauty is enjoyed and realised as the beauty of Brahman. Such an enjoyment destroys the bounds imposed on us by the mind-body, and unites us with the unbounded bliss of *Brahman*. In the same way, the bliss derived from the enjoymnet of the *ma-kāras* rises to an infinite and divine plane, when it is realised as identical with the bliss of *Brahman*. The truth of this position is attested by the life-histories of numerous *sādhakas*.

---

[1] Bhoga-yogātmakaṁ kaulam। *ibid*, 2.24; bhogo yogāyate। *ibid*, 2. 25.

Of the five *ma-kāras*, the fifth one called *maithuna* or sex-relation has naturally become the object of worst criticism. To clarify the position, *kāma* or lust is regarded as the greatest obstacle to spiritual progress, and it is the sex-relation or relation between the male and the female that enkindless the fire of lust.[1] Hence, the question naturally comes : how can sex-relation be regarded as a path for spiritual progress? To this, our reply is that, in *Tantra*, a *sādhaka* is advised not to enjoy his female associate through the feeling of lust, but to look upon and enjoy her as a human representation of the *Divine Mother* - to transform the woman into the Mother. Likewise, a *sādhikā* or female aspirant is also advised to look upon and enjoy her male associate as a human representation of *Śiva*.[2]

In reality, *kāma* or lust and *preman* or love are but two aspects of the same psychological attitude. If we can turn the direction of *kāma* towards the Lord or the Mother, it reveals itself as *preman*. Great sages of ages have shown in their practical lives that *kāma* can be transformed into *preman* and that, accordingly, all the conditions evoking *kāma* can be transformed into conditions evoking *preman*. We have already referred to the event of an assembly of the *Tāntrikas* where the head of the circle and his female associate embraced each other in a naked position and were absorbed in *samādhi*. Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja in his *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* informs us that Rāmānanda Rāya, a *Vaiṣṇava*-saint and devotee of Śrī Caitanya, used to practise with some *devadāsis*-girls in the services of the deities in a temple - as his associates. Rāmānanda Rāya used to bath these girls in his own hands, ornament them and apply perfume to their bodies. And while doing so, he used to be absorbed in the plane of divine realisation. We cannot doubt the sanctity of the behaviour of Rāya and the height of his realisation, because of the fact that a great saint and staunch follower of self-control like Śri Caitanya paid his highest tributes to Rāya, saying that he was matchless in his self-control, and that like a stone he ever remained unmoved by the feeling of lust. Great devotees like Caṇḍidāsa, Viśvamaṅgala and Jayadeva also used to practise with their female associates. In the life of Sri Ramakrishna also, we find that one day, by the direction of his lady-preceptor Bhairavi Brahmani, he had to sit on the lap of a naked, beautiful and full-grown girl; but even in this condition he remained unmoved by lust and behaved like a child. The key to the attainment of such a mental balance lies in the divinisation or motherisation of woman. It will not be out of place to mention here that Śrīkṛṣṇa's *Rāsa*-sport with the *Gopis* was played in such a divine plane. And through the practice of *maithuna*,

---

[1] *Anācāraḥ sadācārastv-akāryaṁ kāryamuttamam*। *asatyam api satyam syāt kaulikāṇāṁ kuleśvari*।। *Apeyaṁ api peyaṁ syād abhakṣyaṁ bhakṣyam eva ca*। *Agamyam api gamyaṁ syāt kaulikāṇāṁ kuleśvari*।। *ibid*, 9. 57.

[2] cf. Jahi śatruṁ mahābāho kāmarūpaṁ durāsadam *Bhagavadgītā*, 3. 43.

Tantra teaches us this great secret of divinisation or motherisation of woman.

We may thus conclude that all the practices with the *makāras* teach us to divinise the objects of our attachment or enjoyment. When a *sādhaka* is successful in this divinisation, he sees that the material *ma-kāras* are transformed into the spiritual *ma-kāras*. In other words, in this plane, he enjoys the *ma-kāras* in their symbolic or spiritual senses as representing different planes of spiritual realisation. He now derives the greatest pleasure from the enjoyment of the nectar of the bliss of Brahman [*madya*]; the whole of his existence [*mudrā*] including the *prāṇa-vāyu* or vital air [*matsya*] is realised by him as identical with the existence of the *Supreme;* all the actions relating to his mind-body are brought under his control [*māṁsa*]; and his self becomes fully absorbed in *Brahman* [*maithuna*].

Of course, it is very risky to practise with the *ma-kāras*, particularly,with *maithuna*, as in this path there is every chance of downfall at every step. The *Kulārṇavatantra* therefore says that these practices are more dangerous than walking through the edge of a sword, or clasping the neek of a tiger or catching hold of a snake. That is why the practices with the *ma-kāras* are generally kept secret within the circle of a selected few, and great religious teachers concerned with the mass do never propagate them.

● ● ●

CHAPTER-XI

Esotericism in the *Tantras*

The *esoteric* practices enjoined in the *Tantras* have been a matter of much speculation among scholars and it has naturally been asked how such *vulgarism* can form a part of *Sādhanā*. H.V. Guenther has tried to give a philosophical background of the whole practice[1], but it must be agreed that philosophy can be formed in the background of any and everything and we can remain satisfied with such speculation. The *Tantras* have, no doubt a philosophy of their own, but such texts are more concerned with practices which have influenced the votaries more than philosophy. The question arises, therefore, what may be the significance of such practices? For an answer we have to turn to two *Tantric* works the *Mahācīnācārakrama* and the *Kāmākhyātantra*.

To begin with the *Mahācīnācārakrama*, which may be regarded as an important standard manual of *esotericism*. As the name indicates, it is formulating the *Ācāra* or the practices prevailing in *Mahācīna*.

Mahācīna has been variously identified with Tibet, China, Mongolia etc. Agehananda Bharati observes : *I am not even quite sure if Mahācīna ever*

---

[1] H.V. Guenther, *Yuganaddha*, Varanasi, 1969.

meant Tibet : the late Dr. Raghuvira told he thought it was Mongolia, and this is what Bagchi appears to have held. Most scholars in India seem to agree that *Mahācīna* and *Bhūṭan* are synonyms; I would, however, suggest that the term should not really be equated with an actual geographical name - I think *Mahācīna* to *Hindu Tāntric* authors suggested the entire to the north of the *Himālayas*, Tibet, and at least parts of *Mangolia* and Western China. There is no text in *Tāntric* literature which would indicate a serious attempt to demarcate any regions lying outside India.[1]

The story in the *Tantra* runs as follows :

The sage *Vasiṣṭha*, son of *Brahmā*, worshipped the goddess *Tārā* for ten thousand years at *Nīlācala* in the region of *Kāmākhyā* and yet the goddess did not come before him. Then when he was about to curse the goddess, she appeared and said :

Go to *Mahācīna* and there you will find that *Janārdana-Viṣṇu Buddha* is performing my worship. Learn from him the secret, because he only knows about it; and by that method you will be successful.[2]

Then *Vasiṣṭha* went there and saw that the worship of the goddess was being performed by the Buddha, surrounded by damsels, with *madirā* or wine etc. *Vasiṣṭha* came back to *Nīlācala* and performed the worship with the help of five *Makāras* i.e., *madya* or wine, *māṃsa* or meat, *matsya* or fish, *mudrā* or parched kidney beans and *maithuna* or intercourse with a *caṇāla* women.[1]

---

[1] Agehananda Bharati, *I.C.*, 61

[2] *Mayi ārādhanacaraṁ Buddharūpī Janārdanaḥ* ।
eka eva vijānāti nānyaḥ kaścana tattvataḥ ।
vṛthaiva yāmabāhulya kālo'yaṁ gaṇitastvayā ।
viruddhācāraśīlena mama tattvamajānatā ।।
udvodharūpiṇo viṣṇoh sannidhiṁ yāhi samprati ।
tenopadṛṣṭācāreṇa samārādhana suvrata ।।
tadaiva suprasannākṣi tvayi yāsyāmyasaṁśayaḥ ।
(paṭala, i)

If we study the above account strictly from the sociological point of view we may possibly come to the following conclusions.

That this vulgar form of worship originally came from the *Semi-Mongoloid* region;

That, it became prevalent among the low-caste people in the *Hindu* caste hierarchy; that, it is for this reason that the *Kāmākhyā* in *Kāmarūpa* or Assam is called the *Yonipīṭha*. The past of the Great Mother fell after her body was cut to pieces by the discus of Viṣṇu.

Whatever may the sociological interpretations be, the account of the *Tantra* gives to this form of worship, an entirely new meaning. The identification of the Buddha with *Janārdana-Nārāyaṇa* is not without significance, for, in a passage in the *Śāntiparvan* of the Great Epic *Janārdana-Nārāyaṇa* is associated both with *pravṛtti* or worldly association of *tapasyā* (austerity) and *dharma*.[2] It is generally held that the diadactic section of the *Mahābhārata* was composed, just after the *Scytho-Kuṣāṇa* age and it is therefore very likely that the theory of *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti*, which form the keynote of the esoteric practices in the *Tantras*, really draws its inspiration from the texts already prevalent in which we find the presence of many trans-Himalayan idea.[1]

---

[1] *Nīlācalaṁ samāgamya kulācāraparāyaṇaḥ* ।
tato kṣamālāṁ yuvatīṁ cāṇḍālī, ramayenmuniḥ ।।

[2] *Mbh.*, xii, Ṣ. 80-83.
eṣa vedanidhiḥ śrīmānneṣa vai tapaso nidhiḥ ।
eṣa yogaśca Sāṁkhyaṁ ca Brahmacryaṁ havirvibhuḥ ।।
Nārāyaṇaparā vedā yajñā Nārāyāṇatmākāḥ ।
tapo Nārāyaṇaparaṁ Nārāyaṇaparā gatiḥ ।।
Nārāyaṇaparaṁ satyamṛtaṁ Nārāyaṇātmakam ।
Nārāyaṇaparo dharmaḥ punarāvṛttidurlabhaḥ ।

The orthodox pattern of austerity lays emphasis on renouncing the world and becoming

---

pravṛttilakṣaṇaścaiva dharmo Nārāyṇātmakaḥ I I
Nārāyaṇātmako gandho bhūmau śreṣthatamaḥ smṛtaḥ I I

1. The trans-Himālayan ideas evidently crept into Indian literature during the Greco-Scythian age when India had intimate connection with Central Asia. Thus the *Nārāyaṇīya* section of the *Mahābhārata* (*Mbh*, xii. 349ff) speaks of the *Pāñcarātras* whose code of conduct was composed on Mount Meru or Pamir (Seal, *Vaiṣṇavism and Christianity*, 48f), while it also records the story of Nārada's vayoge to *Śvetadvīpa* where lived Nārāyaṇa-hari. The account clearly shows that this *Śvetadvīpa* was somewhere in the Central Asia to north of Pamir (Chattopadhyaya, *Sects*, 60-61). The famous *Guḍimallam* liṅgam exhibits on it the figure of Śiva whose face is of Mongolian character (Gopinath Rao, *Elements of Hindu Iconography*, vol.ii i, 66ff). S. Levi has pointed out that *Mañjuśrī*, *Amitābha* and *Kṣitigarbha* of Mahāyāna Buddhism originated in Central Asia and later on found their way into India (Levi, as quoted in Elliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, vol.iii, 221). That the *Meru* was identified in the earlier period with the *Pamir*, as suggested by Seal, seems to be supported by the statement of Megasthenes that in his time Dionysios, identified with Śiva, was worshipped in the hill region extending in the West as far as Bactria, the present Balkh in Afghanistan and in the north as far as Meros or Meru (McCrindle, *Megasthenes and Arrian*, Ṃf). Pamir is to the north or a little north-east of Afghanistan.

mendicants. As Oldenberg points out, *from the brahmins who knowing the Ātman renounce all that is earthly, and become beggars, the historical development progresses in a regular line up to Buddha, who leaves kith and kin, and gods and chattels, to seeks deliverance, wandering homeless in the yellow garb of monk.*[1] This idea of asceticism can also be found in the great Epic side by side with the *Pravṛtti cum Nivṛtti* ideal Truth, self-control, *asceticism*, generosity, non-violence, constancy in virtue these are the means of success, nor caste nor family.[2] This emphasis on *asceticism* is the key-note of the earlier form of *sādhanā* which is quoted here. The *Tantras* appear to entertain the view that true asceticism or spirit of self-sacrifice means that all the objects of enjoyment will remain before a person, but he should not in any way be attached to them. This is the *Tāntric* view of renunciation and this finds its best expression in the *Cīnācāra*.[3]

The *Mahācīnācārakrama* states that the worship should be as follows : that a young lady should be brought for the purpose; she should be handsome, full of youthful blooms, not shy, but smiling; she should be made completely naked and her body should be besmeared with scents. Then the *Sādhaka* should worship the Mother Goddess in her *private parts* according to the prescribed manner. The worshipper should then resort to

---

1. Oldenberg, *Buddha*, 32.
2. *Mbh*, iii.37.33; cf. iii. 84.83
3. *The account of Vasiṣṭha's voyage to Mahācīna and the injunction of Cīnācāra are found in other early Tāntric texts as well besides the Cīnācārakrama.*

Prāṇāyāma and remain ever calm in mind linking that the Mother Goddess is there. And he will never see such a lady naked except at the time of worship, for in that case, he will surely go to hell. The text is very emphatic on this point. The whole process is to be performed in the presence of the *guru* who will guide his disciple. The worshipper is given a note of caution that all the deities have their place in the body of women, and hence the worship of women is considered to be the best of all worship.[1]

In this connection mention is made of three *Pīṭhas-Yonipīṭha* or worship of the *Yoni*, *mantrapīṭha*, worship with the help of *mantra*, i.e., prescribed formula, and *manaḥpīṭha*, or mental worship; but the *yonipīṭha* is stated to be the best of all *pāṭhas*.[2]

Some of the injuctions stated in this connection be understood properly. Thus it is maintained that the woman who is to be so worshipped should either be an actress, or *Kāpālinī*, prostitute, washer-woman, barber woman, a brahmin woman, a *śūdra* or a milkmaid.[3]

It is curious that the list is thus a limited one not including a *kṣatriya* lady or one belonging

---

1. *yato hi yoṣito dehe sarvadevasys saṁsthitih* I
ataḥ pūjāsu sarvāsu tāsām prādhānyamucyate I I
(*Paṭala*, 3,3)

2. *yonipīṭhe mantrapīṭhe manaḥpīṭhe ca Pārvatī* I
tridhā bhinnā mayā māyā (?) pūjyate sādhakottamaiḥ I I
sarveṣāmeva pīṭhānām pradhānaṁ yonipīṭhakam I
(*Paṭala* 3,3)

3. *naṭī kāpālinī veśyā rajakī nāpitāṅganā* I
brāhmaṇī śūdrakanyā ca tathā gopālakanyakā I I
(*Paṭala* 3)

to the *vaiśya* group. In any case, it is ordained that such ladies should be well-versed in the *Tāntric* lore (*vidagdhā)* and should be attached to the *guru* and should know the *mantras.*[1] The implication here evidently is that while the worshipper himself shuld be a proper *sādhaka,* the lady also should be a *sādhikā;* while the *sādhaka* himself will be a restrained one, the lady should also be so. Why? otherwise, she may induce the *sādhaka* to indecent acts. It is advised that the *sādhaka* after worshipping the *private parts* of the lady who is to be considered as the *Bhairavī,* should worship his own *penis* and think himself to be a *Bhairava.*[2]

The *Kāmākhyātantra,* on the other hand, maintains that for the worship of five Makāras or *Sādhanā,* another man's wife or a public woman is preferable.[3] The reason evidently is that another man's wife, and not one's own, can be regarded as mother. In fact, for understanding the esoteric practices, the *Kāmākhyātantra* is of great help to us.

---

[1] *naṭī kāpālinī veśyā rajakī nāpitāṅganā* ।
brāhmaṇī śūdrakanyā ca tathā gopālakanyakā ।।
(Paṭala 3)

[2] *anuliptāṁ muktakeśīṁ tatastadyonimaṇḍale* ।
pīthapūjāṁ vidhāyātha tammadhye pūjayecchivām ।।
upacāraiḥ pūjayitvā- cārghyaṁ datvā punaḥ punaḥ ।
japtvā liṅge bhairavañca pujayitvā Maheśvarīm ।।
(Paṭala 3)

[3] 3rd paṭala, 3; the *Mahācīnācārakrama* which is also heterodox in character, however, states the following : *strīsaṅginā sadā bhāvyamanyathā svastriyā saha* ।
(Paṭala 2,2). The public women are generally hated and one having cohabition with her for enjoyment purpose would be condemned. This goes to some extent against the observation of the *kāmākhyātantra.*

It carries esotericism to the extreme, but simultenously prescribes immense self control, almost impossible for ordinary human being. Thus it is stated that the *sādhaka* should kiss the Bhairavī, put his nails on her buttock and ultimately have cohabition with her, but his semen should not come out[1] and in that embracing pose he should

---

[1] *karpūritamukhaṃ svādu sādhakaścumvayenmudā* ǀ
tasyādharo yathā bhṛṅgo nīrajavyākhulaḥ priye ǀǀ
dantakṣatritanañca paramantatra kārayet ǀ
āliṅgayen madonmattaḥ sudṛḍhaṁ kucamardanaṁ ǀǀ
nakhāghātairnitambc ca ramayedratipaṇḍitaḥ ǀ
punaḥ punaścumbanañca yonau kuryāt kuleśvari ǀǀ
śukrañca stambhayedvīro yanau liṅgaṁ praveśayet ǀ

The statement *śukrañca stambhayedvīro* is very significant and shows the inner meaning of the so-called esoteric practices. In fact, it shows that there is no place of cohabition, in the ordinary sense of the term, in it. Agehananda Bharati, however, observes that *the Hindu Tāntric releases the bīja (semen) with the final svāhā =- the formula that concludes all oblations and libations in the Indian tradition - the Buddhit Vajrāyāna adept retains it, aiming at stabilising the esoteric three jewels (triratna, nor bu gsum) - breath, thought and semen - in a simultaneous act which when sucessful, yields the state of oneness in duality, the yuganaddha (sku grub zung 'jung) of which the yagam is the icon'* (*l.c.* 265). With due respect to the great authority, I am constrained to not with regret that he has evidently ignored the account of the *Kāmākhyātantra* and has dwelt indirectly on the connotation of th word *svāhā* only. It may be that the *Kāmākhyātantra* is composed in the light of the Vajrayāna text, but nevertheless the *Kāmākhyātantra* is primarily a Hindu document. The Hindus either reject the *maithuna* aspect of *sādhanā* completely, or take it in its proper sense. There are, however, passages in the *Tantras* that explain the *Maithuna* as the culmination of *prāṇāyāma* wherein the *kulakuṇḍalinī* is brought in to meet the *sahasrāra*, or that Śiva is thought to be united in the go on muttering his *mantra* or prescribed mystic words, *eight thousand times.*[1] This he should continue at least for three days with his mind under his complete control.[2]

There is an alternative method as well. Those who cannot control themselves completely, should simply fix their gaze on the *private part* of *the lady* and thinking her to be the Mother Goddess, should continue the worship for seven nights.[3]

The question now arises-what was the real secret of this form of worship ? Did it include any vulgarity ? In other words, do the *Tantras* consider

---

body of the worshipper. These are nothing but the apologetic explanation and my aim has been to explain this form of worship in its face value, and therein we get probably an extreme from of renunciation not at all possible for an ordinary man. There is nothing to be aplogetic in it. Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya on the other hand sees in it a remnant of the primitive agricultural rite whereby he misses trees in the wood (*Lokayata*, 286f). We find *maithuna* aspect associated with *sādhanā* in earlier works as well where it border on vulgarism to some extent. For example it is stated in the *Taittirīyasaṁhitā* (vi. 5.8.6) that the wife to the *yajamāna* had to make an artificial or symbolic aspect of cohabition with the priest (*udgātā*) after the *Soma sacrifice.* We find reference to several such practices in the *Āpastambha Śrautasūtra* (22.13. 1-3) and *Jaiminīyabrāhmaṇa* (2.Ṁ). An attempt has been made in the subsequent pages to show that possibly such practice came in the wake of the homo-Alpine or *round head* Yadus (*infra*, 19). The *Tantras* prescribe the same for the purpose of renunciation.

[1] *punarliṅge sthite yonau japeccāṣṭasahasrakam* ।

[2] *dinatrayaṁ madhādhīraḥ prajapeddhyānatatparaḥ* ।

[3] *yoniṁ vīkṣya japenmantram saptarātramatandritaḥ* ।
pratyahaṛ satataṛ kṛtvā so'pi siddhiścaraḥ kalau ।।

cohabiting etc. as a part of *sādhanā* ? This question agitates modern mind and consequently the *Tantras* are brought to much disrepute. Let us see what the *Mahācīnācārakrama* says on this point :

> *One who is a yogi cannot be a bhogi and who is a bhogi cannot be a yogi; but one who is yogabhogātmaka, should be regarded supreme.*[1]

Thus instead of theoretically preaching the doctrines of *Pravṛtti* and *Nivṛtti*, the *Tantras* harmonise the two factors with emphasis on the latter. This is the practical *renunciation* in a *Sādhaka's* life.

The *Kumārītantra* states emphatically that a worshipper, who performs this type of *Ācārā* for material gain or for satisfying sensual pleasures, goes to hell.[2] This warning is very significant. The *Kulārṇava* states that if by drinking wine one can attain *siddhi*, then the vilest drinker of wine could have easily attained it; if by taking meat one can attain bliss, then every meat-eater would have obtained the supreme goal. The *Kulārṇava* is an authoritative work on the *Pañcamakārasādhanā* and this observation may show the nature of this practice. The work further states that this practice is more difficult than walking on blades of swords, holding tiger by the neck or catching hold of a snake.[3] The *Gandharvatantra* also warns against the

---

1. *yogī cennaiva bhogī syād bhogī cenna ca yogavān* |
   yogabhogātmakaṁ kaulaṁ tasmāt sarvādhikantvidam ||
2. *Kumārītantra*, as quoted in *Tantrasāra*
   arthādvā kāmato vāpi saukhyādapi ca yo naraḥ |
   liṅgayonirato mantrī rauravaṁ narakaṁ vrajet ||
3. *madyapānena manujo yadi siddhiṁ labheta vai,* |
   madyapānaratāḥ sarve siddhiṁ gacchantu pāmarāḥ ||

performance of this practice for sensuas pleasure. If thus instead of taking such injunctions as camouflage for sensual acts, as some scholars interpret them to be, we take them in their face value and believe in the honesty of such statements, then we may perhaps conclude that the *sādhanā* was to be performed by a *sādhaka* who has all the senses under his strict control, and such *sādhakas* are regarded as the *Kaulas* or the *Sādhakas* of the hightst order. Evidently, it was exercised to see or to examine, how far a *Sādhaka* has progressed in conquering his bodily passions and how far even in course of such *Sādhanā* his mind remains fixed on the supreme deity.

The account of the *Mahācīnācārakrama* may show that this particular form of so-called esoteric practices came from the proto-Mongoloid region. So leaving the *Tantras*, we may now consider other evidences throwing light on the subject. In the *Durgā-stotra* of the *Mahābhārata*, the goddess is described as *having her perpetual abode on the Vindhya, and delighting in spiritual liquor, flesh and sacrificial victims.* (*Vindhye caiva naga-śreṣṭhe tava sthānaṁ hi śāśvatam Kāli Kāli Mahākālī śīdhu-māṃsa-paśupriye*[1]. *The association of the goddess with the Vindhya* region is interesting as the range was the home of various Proto-Australoid tribes, while elsewhere the god-

---

māṁsabhakṣaṇamātrena yadi puṇya gatirbhavet।
loke māṁsāśinaḥ sarve puṇyabhājo bhavanti hi।।
strī8sambhogena deveśi, yadi mokṣo bhavet vai।
sarve'pi jantava loke muktāḥ syuḥ strīniṣevanāt।।.
kṛpāṇadhārāgamanādvyāghrakarṇāvalmavanāt।
bhujaṅgadhā- raṇānn ūnamaśakyaṁ kulasevanam।। (iv 14)

[1] *Muir, Original Sanskrit Texts,* iv, 369.

dess is expressely associated with the *Śabaras* and the *Pulindas* who lived on the same range.[1] The description clearly shows that a Mother-Goddess of the Proto-Australoid tribes was now being merged with the great *Aryan Mother-Goddess,* and the *Śāktas* were imbibing un-*Aryan* habits. The account shows further how the goddess was worshipped with *Madya* and *Māṃsa*.

Our attention in this connection is naturally drawn to the account of the amorous plays of Kṛṣṇa with the Gopīs at Gokula. As J.N. Farquhar points out *the dramatist Bhāsa who probably dates from the first century A.D. has a play called Bālacarita which tells the story of Kṛṣṇa's youth as its name indicates.*[2] In it we find Kṛṣṇa performing *Hallīśakrīḍā* with the Gopīs which is nothing but an *innocent* dance. In the account of the same theme in the *Viṣṇu*. *purāṇa* there are some erotic touches, while in the *Harivaṃśa,* as R.P. Chanda points out, *Hallīśakrīḍā* is treated as synonymous with *rati,* or sexual enjoyment, and we are further told that the boy Kṛṣṇa spent night after night in the company of young *Gopa* girls, who are forbidden to do so by thier parents and brothers.[3] We have purposely quoted here Chanda's account to show his interpretation. The actual text however refers to *rati* and to the *gopīs* as *ratipriyā* which may refer to erotic plays short of sexual enjoyment for *Rati* also means devotion, and *Ratipriyā,* devoted ones.[4] It

---

1. *Harivaṁśa,* ii. 3. 7-8.
2. J.N. Farquhar, *Outline of the Religious Literature of India,* 144.
3. R.P. Chanda, *The Indo-Aryan Races,* 45-6.
4. V.S. Apte, *The Students' Sanskrit-English Dictionary,* q.v. *rati*

seems that such a cult had been developing gradually among the *Yādavas* or the *Sātvatas* of the *Mathurā* region. The *Yadus* possibly came from Western Asia, for the *Ṛgveda* informs us that they along with the *Turvaśus* were brought by *Indra* over the sea (vi.45.1). In the *Vedic* age the term *Samudra,* as pointed out in the *Vedic Index,* possibly denoted the southern part of the *Indus* and as such it may be presumed that the *Yadus* and the *Turvaśus* came through the *Bolan Pass.* In the *Ṛgveda,* x.62.10 the *Yadus* and *Turvaśus* are called *Dāsas* or barbarians. From these evidences R.P. Chanda infers that the *Yadus* were of *homo-Alpinus* origin, settled originally in Western Asia, whence they came to India, settled in *Surāṣṭra* or *Kathiawad Peninsula* and then spread to *Mathurā.*[1]

Thus we find that different ethnic elements contributed towards the development of esoteric *Sādhanā* in India : the Proto-Australoids contributing *Sādhanā* with wine and flesh; the homo-Alpinus an erotic form of *sādhanā*; and, the Mongoloids, the *Sādhanā* with wine, flesh and women. *Matsya* or fish which was added later on with this worship is interesting for custom shows that fish is offered in the *bhoga* or daily meal of the Devī in Bengal only. The *Mahānirvāṇatantra recommends* three species of fish for sacrifice which are found espically in Bengal,[2] while *mudrā* or fried rice is a favourite food primarily in Eastern India, and these might have been added when the practice spread to Bengal.

---

[1] R.P. Chanda, *I.c.* 15-20. It is however better to class the *Yadus* under the group *broad heads.*

[2] *Mahānirvāṇatantra,* vi. 7.3; cf. Winternitz, *History of Indian Literature,* i, 592, fn. 4.

In recent times much has been written on this esotericism since such sculptures are found on some of the temples at Orissa, Khajuraho and some other places. In *Nepalese* Buddhism the pose is called *sambara* and *Yab-yum* in Tibetan Buddhism. (Farquhar, l.c., 265-6). Various theories have been suggested on this practice of which the following principal ones may be noted:

1. The *Pañcamakāra* is nothing but a licence for licentiousness. It records the age-long attempt to cover dark acts in the garb of religion.
2. The account is an allegorical one representing in disguise the various processes of *Prāṇāyāma, ṣaṭcakrabheda* and the ultimate bliss or happiness that the process leads to.
3. Man is drawn to the path of religion after their enjoyment is satisfied. *Tantras* have prescribed intense enjoyment through *Pañcamakāra* that would ultimately bring a spirit of renunciation in the mind.
4. The *Tantras* never neglect the materialistic aspect of life and they maintain that *Mokṣa* can be attained even through material enjoyment. The *Pañcamakāra* is nothing but an attempt in this direction.

5. The *Tāntrics* wanted to keep their rituals and doctrines secret and therefore they have tried to confuse the ordinary people by such accounts.

Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya sees nothing but traces of obscure cults and agricultural ritualism in the *Tantras*, Of the five *Makāras* he specially selects *Madya* and *Maithuna*. He quotes extensive sociological evidences to show how primitive tribes make magical use of wine for the purpose of promoting agriculture and bringing fertility to the land. The belief in the magical power of the wine can be found among the *Vedic* people as well as illustrated by the extensive use of *Soma* in the sacrifice. Similarly, at the time of marriage some of the primitive people use it in their obscure rituals with their beliefs in its inherent fertility.[1]

Fertility and sexual intercourse are connected together by the primitive tribes. Thus some of the tribes follow the peculiar custom of enjoying the wife on the ground ready for sowing with the belief that such intercourse will lead to the fertility of the land. Others again abstain totally from having any connection with the wife with the belief that the fertility of the wife may thus pass to the land to be sown.[2] The first example may be cited in support of the thesis of Chattopadhyaya, but the second goes entirely against him.

---

[1] D.P. Chattopadhayay, *Lokāyata*, 286 ff.

[2] Frazer, J.H., *The golden Bough*, i, London, 1957 (abrgd. ed.) Āff.

Those who emphasise on the sex elements and agricultural rites[1] in the *Tantras* may point to the system of *Śivaliṅgapūjā*. Term like *liṅga*, penis, *lāṅgala*, plough etc. come from the Austro-Asiatic source and thus a *priori liṅga* would signify some connection with agricultural rites. Sir Marshall discovered in Mohenjo-daro many objects bearing resemblance to the later *Śivaliṅgas*, and also *rings* which he interpreted as symbols of *yoni*.[2] If this interpretation be accepted then it may be assumed that worship of *phallic* symbols had been prevalent in the prehistoric Indus sites. This seems to be confirmed by the condemnation of the *Śiśnadevas* in the *Ṛgveda*.[3] When however, this particular cult became a part of the Indo-Aryan pantheon, it entirely lost its original meaning and it developed a grand meaning of its own. We may note here the famous *Guḍimallam liṅgam* which may be assigned to the first century B.C., i.e., long before the rise of the *Tāntric* stem of *Sādhanā*. The *liṅga,* five feet in height, bears on it a beautiful figure of *Śiva*. Another *liṅga* found at *Bhita* bears five faces, which, Gopinath Rao thinks, represents the five aspects of Lord Śiva, viz., *Īśāna, Tatpuruṣa, Aghora, Vāmadeva* and *Sadyojāta*. Such *Mukha-liṅgas* or the *Guḍimallam liṅga* with the figure of Śiva can hardly be regarded as *phallic* emblems. It seems that since first century B.C., if not earlier, the *liṅgas* came to be regarded as *Śiva* himself and this tradition evidently had been continuing till the time of the composition of the *Liṅgapurāṇa* which states, *liṅgaḥ sākṣāt Maheśvaraḥ.*[1] Thus by the time when the *Tantras* came into existence *liṅga* has ceased to be regarded as *phallus* or as having anything to do with primitive agricultural rites.

---

[1] The Austric speakers supplied to *Indo-Aryan* its common word for *arrow* (bāna), and for *stick* and *phallus* or *the phallus symbol*, both from a word meaning originally *stick*, and then *digging-stick for ploughing* (*lakuṭa, laguḍa, liṅga: lauḍā* in NIA-Biḥari), and these show two noteworthy aspects of the cultural life of the Austric speakers which had their repercussion on that of the *Aryan* speakers. (*Vedic Age*, W.F).

[2] J. Marshall, *Mohenjodaro and the Indus Civilization*, i, 58ff

[3] The term *Śiśna-devāḥ* occurs twice in the *Ṛgveda*, but its exact interpretation has been a matter of great controversy. Some western scholars take the expression as meaning : *those whose god is Śiśna* (*membrum virile*). *Sāyaṇa*, however, gives the following explanation :
Śiśna-devāḥ śiśnena divyanti krīḍdanti iti Śiśna-devāḥ abrahmacaryā ityarthaḥ tathā ca Yāskaḥ .... *Śiśna-devāḥ abrahmacaryāḥ*.
(Chattopadhayaya, *Sects*, 98)

Except at *Kāmarūpa* (Assam), we have no direct evidence of the worship of the *yoni* among the *Śāktas*. Some concepts of fertility cult no doubt centred round it, as for example, *Śakti* is some time called *Śākambharī,*[2] which shows the identification of Bhūdevī with the great Mother Goddess. This conception is again an old one. Thus we may note two seals from Mohenjo-daro which make very interesting study. In the first of them we find a nude female figure, turned upside down, with ouside of the same seal, there is a picture of a man with a sickle-shaped knife in hand, and a woman seated on the ground with hands raised in supplication. The two pictures have been

---

1. *Liṅgapurāṇa,* xviii. 15
2. *Mbh.* vi. 23.9

interpreted as showing human sacrifice before the Mother Goddess, who is no other than *Bhū* or *Pṛthivī,* with which *Aditi* is sometimes equated in the *Ṛgveda*. The picture on the other seal is more interesting. A female figure stands on the bifurcated branch of a *pipal* tree, while the worshipper brings a goat, evidently for sacrifice, and a number of people standing in the lower register, appear to be taking part in it. Chanda points out that *an important aspect of Durgā-worship, called Navapatrikā* or the worship of the *nine plants* (lit. leaves), also clearly shows that the goddess was conceived as the personification of the vegetation spirit. These nine plants are, *-rambhā plantain tree, kacvi (arum colocasia), haridrā turmeric plant, jayanti, barley, bel* or *bilva, wood-apple, dāḍima, pomegranate, aśoka, māna,* and *dhānya, paddy*. The form of the goddess presiding over the *plaitain* tree is called *Brāhmaṇī,* over the *kacvi* is called *Kālikā,* over the turmeric plant is called *Durgā,* over *Jayantī* is called *Kārtikī,* over the wood-appled is called *Śivā,* over the pomegranate tree is called *Raktadānitakā* (*she with blood-red teeth*), over the *aśoka* tree is called *Śokarahitā* (*she without sorrow caused by bereavement*), over the *māna* plant is called *Cāmuṇḍā,* and over the paddy plants is *Lakṣmī* (the goddess of fortune). After praying severally to the deities of the nine plants, the votary concludes, *Om, O leaf (ipatrike), O nine forms of Durgā, you are the darling of Mahādeva; accept all these offering and protect me, O queen of heaven. Oṃ, adoration to Durgā dwelling in the nine plants.*[1] This worship of *Navapatrikā* is but a survival of the agrarian phase of Durgā-worship. The same scholar further refers to the worship of the *kula* trees by the *Śāktas* and interprets the dictum *the Kulayoginīs always dwell in all these Kula trees and none should sleek under the kula trees nor injure them* as referring to the *Kulayoginīs who were originally the minor vegetation spirits.*[1]

---

[1] R.P. Chanda, *I.C.,* 70-1.

Thus there cannot be any doubt that the *Śākta* cult of India absorbed into it a vegetation cult which was partly of un-*Aryan* origin. But this *Śākta*-vegetation-cult can hardly be connected with sex matters ultimately giving rise to the *Pañcamakāra sādhanā* of the *Tantras*.

The sculptures at Khajuraho and Orissa depicting the *Maithuna* aspect, came to the forefront not earlier than the 9th century A.D.

On the other hand, there is no *Tāntric* text which can be confidently assigned to before that time, where such practices are mentioned. The *Kulārṇava,* which describes it, is practically of the same date, and to the same period we may assign the early *yāmalas*. Thus in general we may assert that since the ninth century this *Cīnācāra* gradually entered into the field of *Hindu sādhanā,* whatever might have been the case with the *Buddhist* worshippers. As already stated, though the system of *Pañcamakāra* is called *Cīnācāra,* parts of such practices have been prevalent among the Proto-Australoids of the *Vindhya* region and the followers of the Gopāla-Kṛṣṇa cult in *Mathurājanapada*. It is not unlikely that when *Indian* religious teachers went to the trans-*Himālayan* regions they got a fresh impetus to this form of *Sādhanā* to examine aptitude for practical renunciation. In this connection we may note that the *Herukatantra* treats of the worship of *Heruka* and *Vajrayoginī* in each other's embrace, a secret and mystic worship, much in vogue in Nepal. The Nepalese are very unwilling to show the image or to give out its secrets. The worship is performed with all the parapharnelia of a *Tāntrika* rite.

---

[1] *Ibid.,* 72

● ● ●

CHAPTER-XII

The *Tantras* and the Indian Art

A later epoch of devotional upsurge associated with *Tāntrika* renaissance in India Witnesses a similar profound change in plastic treatment. The images of the *Divine Mother* as *Gaurī* and her emanations such as *Surasundarī*, *Apsarā* and *Nāyikā*, lavishly multiplied on the facades of temples, in niches, pillars and ceilings and all round the wall, echoing the joy and exuberance of the feeling of immanence of *Mahā-śakti* or lyrical idealism in *Bhakti*, whether *Buddhist* or *Brahmanical*, leads to a gradual approximation of sculpture to the pattern of painting. Picturesque and mellifluous linear expression penetrates into the integral volume and the geometrical harmony of structure as the vitalistic impulses wax stronger than the metaphysical notions. The tones of *Dilvarā*, *Khajurāho* and *Koṇārk* become soft and malleable as clay, wood or ivory to give vent to ardent religious emotions in sensitive and sensuous modeling in which the plastic and the linear expressiveness interpenetrates. The same minute ornamentation and endless repetition of images, decorations and *motifs* are encountered, as in *High Gothic* sculpture in Europe dominated by a similar spirit of profound mystical exaltation.

At Khajurāho in the *Kandarīya*, *Parśvanātha* and *Lakṣmaṇa* temples even the ascetic Śiva is endowed like Pārvatī with youthful grace and charming three-fold (*tribhaṅga*) inflection. He holds a lotus along with a noose and serpent or wears a flower garland while he is adorned with profuse, sensitively lineated ornaments-ear-pendants, necklaces, garland and waistclasp with a hanging series of festoons. But the garment, garland and jewelry are organically one with the semi-nude body, although differentiated in detail and grade of relief, and strictly conform to its plastic rhythm. Human elegance is added but the Divine aloofness is not lost, due to the juxta-position of the abstract and the sensuous in human apprehension and of the massive and the curvilinear in plastic form. The verticality of the heavy trident and erect serpent also balances the tenderness and charm of radiant Śiva, stressed by the esoteric *Kaula-Kāpālika* cult that inspired the temple building and sculpture of the *Khajurāho* school.

The facades of the temples at *Khajurāho* are the most animated and resplendent in Indian architecture. Each temple facade is divided into three horizontal belts of sculpture, crowded with charming figures of *Śiva, Pārvatī, Apsarās, Nāyikās* and *Nāginīs*, all the most captivating erotic moods and gestures. At the *Kandarīya* temple each segment of the horizontal belt usually comprises three figures forming a unit. Śiva or Bhairava or Viṣṇu is in the middle of each unit. Surasundarī, which is another name of Śiva's consort and *Apsarā* or *Nāyikā* are on the deity's flanks. In the contemporary philosophy of *Tāntricism*, Śiva and Śakti are dual accents of the same Essence or metaphysical *reality*, and *Śakti* is not merely the supreme Wisdom (*Mahāvidyā*), but also the supreme Enchantment (*Mahāmāyā*). Thus *Devīs*, *Apsarās* and human *Nāyikās* or danseuses change their places. Surasundarī, according to the *Matsyapurāṇa*, is the celestial beauty who attends and entertains the knowers of Brahman, adorning them with ornaments befitting Brahman. *Surasundarī* or *Apsarā*, then, is the embodiment of the beauty and bliss of realisation of Brahman. She is not only one celestial nymph, but many celestial nymphs.

A hundred different moods and gestures of these celestial nymphs, bewildering in their complexity, that are derived from the *Kāmasūtra* and the *Rati-mañjarī*, are depicted with minute attention to details, but these are never extravagant nor effusive, being rendered reflectively and symbolically. For each nuance of emotion, each gesture, each movement, however seductive and provocative, is enchantment or *Mahāmāyā* herself, who deflects the sensual to the transcendent in her. The alluring, languid curvature of the nymph's arms and *torso* is sharply contrasted with the smooth roundness of her swelling hips and full breasts and the exaggerated stiffness and straightness of her legs. The sharp angle of her sleek head with its heavily decorated coiffure stratified in coils, the profile of her face with its elongated eye-brows and closed or drooping eyes and the rhythmical movement of the narrow twisted scarf around the tender and heavy breasts, the back and the hip underline the contours of the semi-nude body from all angles. For beauty must be seen from all perspectives so as to achieve concentration of apprehension and feeling. But the sensuous enchantment of the body partakes of the ethereal. This is stressed by the lightness and slenderness of the modelled form in the setting of the wall, pilaster, recess or projection, the subtlety and incisiveness of the posture and gesture and, above all, the amplitude and purity of modeling of the elliptical face expressive of profound ecstasy. Two hand gesture of *Surasundarī* or *Apsarā* with sharp linear and angular movements expressive of great vitality are especially significant: the hand touching the middle of the crown, the *Brahmarandhra* which in Indian psychology is the seat of *Paramātman* or *Mahā-vidyā*, symbolizes transcendence; and the hand holding a mirror before the face reflecting her own charm and luminosity symbolizes the illusory character of the world and its objects, feelings and experiences.

Expressiveness in *Tāntrik* Sculpture.

The expressive vitality of the whole plastic composition is derived from the stress of three dimensions, the ponderable values of the human features and not from mere undulating linear rhythms and sensuous qualities of the surface relief. Such rigorous discipline of the plastic design and the geometric standard that eschews the superficial effects of smoothness, polish and modulations of light and shade, and never permits the gesture, however fascinating, to degenerate into an extravagant *silhouette* in itself derived from reflective imagination. It is the same reflective imagination which identifies (*Surasundarī*) or *Pārvatī* with *Nāyikā* or *Apsarā* and places with erotic couples (*mithunas*) side by side with gods and goddesses, their sense of being one in two being the same as the highest spiritual realization. That erotic bliss and adoration are the same as further symbolized by the placement in recesses between the horizontal bands of sculpture of worshipful *Nāgiṇīs* or Serpent damsels with joint palms offering obeisance to *Śiva-Śakti*.

The Cosmic Couple, who is transcendent in *Tāntrika* contemplation and art, at the same time bodies forth in every form and appearance of the world process, and is immanent in the most personal, idiomatic and disruptive of man's experiences of the world and the flesh. The senses are the Waves of Bliss (*ānanda-laharī*) of *Mahā-māyā*. There are endless multiplicity and repetition of figures in the Gothic Churches as in the Indian temples, reflecting the same joy and exuberance of spiritual emotions. But the somber mien and gesture of the Gothic status, especially of the Christian Saints, are in marked contrast with the charm and radiance of the angles, ministers and messengers of grace, Attractions (*Ākarṣiṇīs*) and Agents (*Dūtīs*) of the *Cosmic Mother* as they are called, all interwoven rhythmically in belts and stories from wall to wall and from pillar to pillar in the Indian temples, and echoing the irrepressible and all-pervasive sport and delight of *Mahā-Māyā* or Great Illusion. It is the immanence of *Śiva-Śakti* in *Tāntrika* metaphysics and worship that makes God appear and reappear in every niche, corner, wall, pillar and facade of the medieval Indian temples and in the image of deity and man alike and in ravishing amatory gestures.

The dynamic linearism of the limbs, garments, weapons and adornments not only reinforces the mood of each figure, god, goddess, *Surasundarī* or *Apsarā* but makes it personal and piquant. Medieval and post-medieval sculpture is intimate and decisive because of its greater stress on linear network. The delicately and minutely carved and bedecked Viṣṇus, Śiva, Lokeśvara, Pārvatī, Surasundarī, Apsarā and danseuses represent the final products of plastic art in India. The linearisation of their limbs, gestures and adornments does not disregard the restraint and discipline of the tense and smoothly rounded surface. Linear treatment of physiognomy, drapery and ornament in Indian sculpture fits plastic design, and this prevents sentimentality from corroding the absolute values of religious art. At *Koṇārak* in particular, a new superb balance is struck between the plastic and the linear interplay in medieval sculpture. The figures fully carved in the round are large, even colossal and ponderous. Maintaining a living connection with the temple-wall surface, niche and pilaster, they show a heaving, gliding movement and at the same time the expressive power of neat angles, sharp curvilinear tensions and contrasts of the plane surfaces and round volumes with the shadows in the depth of the carvings that are all aided by the triple bend and torsion of limbs. Beads of chains, necklaces of pearls, waist bands and *ūrumālās* with tassels stress in medieval sculpture the smoothness of modelling. The ornaments and adornments as well as the profiles and contours of the body belong to one indivisible plastic conception. The strong sense of immanence of Deity in the World and the flesh in *Tāntrika* worship and ritual, as it represented one of the last syntheses in Indian thought, produced the final and most amiable and delicate plastic forms that have few parallels in any other sculpture.

Many medieval and post-medieval temples in India are very habitations of goddesses and angels who beacon to men from all sides - symbols of their personal moods and delights. Man finds his moods, passions and aspirations, and ultimately finds himself divinished in the sweet and gladsome, sensuous- supersensuous sculpture. The medieval sculpture in India annihilates his material to express the final aspiration of the human spirit.

Indian culture has achieved a golden mean through an age-long reconciliation of mundane and metaphysical interests and goals of life, a balanced recognition in life, morals and thought of both the delights of the sense (*artha, kāma*) and the flights of the being (*dharma, mokṣa*). It is this which explains superbly the harmonious mean of Indian art. Creative imagination here blends the absolute values of transcendental religion with the warmly human values of mysticism, accounting for the stylistic juxtaposition of the abstract and geometric with the naturalistic and psychological treatment, and of the plastic and heaving with the liner and angular forms and relations in almost all classical periods of art.

Reality in Indian Art

In a different and even more remarkable manner, Indian art has achieved a balanced and comprehensive vision. The aim and procedure of art in India is the revelation as much of ideal beauty and harmony as of truth and power, as much of grace and love as of grimness and violence, transcending the human dimension and its finite *pretty* ideal of charm and comeliness, and stirring man to the depths of his Being. There is no doubt that Indian art has treated a much wider range of human emotions, sentiments and values without expressionistic exaggeration than any other art in the world.

According to the *Viāṇudharmottara* (compiled in the Gupta age, 3rd to 4th century A.D.), Indian art aims at the fulfillment of the four-fold goals of life, stressed in their harmonious combination by Indian metaphysics and morals, viz. fulfillment of desires and emotions (*kāma*), of wealth (*artha*), of righteousness (*dharma*)and of liberation (*mokṣa*) through the creative adventures of image-making, Yoga and ritual. These are reciprocally interdependent. In all these, the expression and consolidation of *rasās* or enduring, abstract and universal moods and sentiments-gateways to the apprehension of Reality-are basic. Among the abstract, nine stable sentiments and emotions (*rasas*), *Śānta-rasa* or the expression of supreme repose or silence is of course the principal function of Indian art aiming at liberation. Liberation, according to Abhinavagupta, is based on the realization of the *śānta* or tranquil sentiment and aesthetic attitude. All true art, whatever may be the abstract or enduring feeling or imaginative quality (*rasa*) it evokes, contemplative or violent, compassionate or dreadful, finally establishes repose or tranquillity (*śānta*). But the

Indian artist, due to his training in *Yoga*, ritual and devotion to the formula of contemplation used for image-making, shows no dismay nor hesitation in producing images that are repellent, disturbing and shattering. The *Daśarūpa* plainly asserts that Beauty is absolutely independent of the sympathetic: Delightful or disgusting, exalted or lowly, cruel or kindly, obscure or refined, actual, or imaginary, there is not subject that cannot evoke *rasa* (absolute beauty) in man. This is by no means *expression*. For it is not the idiosyncratic illusions and hallucinations of the self-conscious neurotic or psychotic but impersonal and universal emotions and sentiments of the mature, self-transcending, creative personality that inspire the menacing and terrific, though always exciting and fascinating, forms.

Indian art unfolds the total *Reality* by revealing movingly, powerfully and majestically many moods and emotions other than the tranquil, the benign and the charming, such as the fierce, the dreadful and the destructive (the untoward *rasas*) that only few arts in the world have done.

Lāvaṇya and *Saundarya*

And yet such art-forms exhibit supernatural elegance or divine grace (*lāvaṇya*) derived from the inaccessible depths and flights of the human soul. *Lāvaṇya* (grace), which is heavenly and angelic, as contrasted with *Saundarya* (beauty) which is earthly and human, is a basic quality of Indian art. Not the amiable, external proportions and symmetries of the human body, but inner spiritual tensions, experiences and gestures, as recorded fully and precisely in the *Dhyāna* or *Yogic* meditation formulae, underlie the grace of deities as celebrated in Indian plastic art. The awesome yet grand *Tāntrika* images of Eternity and Time -the supreme cosmogenic principles - *Mahākāla, Bhairava* and varieties of *Cāmuṇḍā* in Bengal, Nepal, Tibet and Java; the dancing *Hevajra* in Bengal, *Siam* in Cambodia; and Trailokyvijaya, with his four faces of *wrath, fury, loathsomeness* and *valour* respectively corresponding to the four untoward *rasas,* in Bengal, Tibet, Java and Indo-China show majesty and power instead of charm and embody certain significant aspects of Reality usually shunned by art. Often it is the same image which reconciles the terrific and the suave, the wrathful and the blissful, realising ambivalent categories, moods and values in the dialectical march of the human soul. All this goes back to the ancient *Upaniṣadic* thought: *Oh wrathful Lord give us full protection through thy auspicious, compassionate countenance.*

The art and worship of *Mahā-vairocana* or the Self-luminous Demiurge, as these spread from Bengal to the whole continent of Asia, from Mongolia and Japan to Cambodia and Indonesia during the 7th and the 9th centuries A.D., dissociated themselves from the metaphysical notions and values of sex duality in Indian *Tāntrikism.* Far away from their homeland, in Japan these inspired, however, a majestic sculpture and delicate painting in *Shingon Buddhism.* Blending grimness and hope, darkness and light, sacrifice and renewal of life-contrasted aspects of the ultimate *Reality* as posited by *Tāntrika* ideology-*Japanese Shingon* art, like Indian and Indonesian *Tāntrika* art, created some of the sublimest cosmic images of the terrible triumph of goodness over evil and the dissolution of mind, life and cosmos, embodied in many Javanese, Cambodian and Japanese figurations, show and boldness, sensitiveness and freedom not reached even in the art of the homeland.

In modern art criticism in the West, the notion that art aims to beauty and sensuous delight has now been discarded. There is a pronounced reaction towards a broader and more impersonal and objective outlook in respect of nature and human life from the sensual-sentimental expression of subjective emotions and sentiments. *The human scale, the human angle has ceased to be the universal norm*. Aesthetic values are being reoriented in the West, there being a stress on truth rather than on beauty, on realism rather than on sentimentalism, on elemental vitality and power rather than on charm and elegance, on cosmism rather than on human idealism. From the viewpoint of modern art criticism, Indian art should be deemed a sensitive and authentic medium of the India's progressive apprehension of the total *Reality* or *Truth* through the centuries.

Gradually the tradition Indian art spread to entire Asia. From *Māmallapuram* radiated its influences towards the East-Sumātrā, Jāvā, Cambodia and China and from Ajantā, Taxilā, Nagarahāra and Bāmiyan to Turkestan and China as far as Korea and Japan.

Cosmism in *Tāntrika* Art

Purāṇic myth art, associated with the neo-Brahmanic revival of the 6th to the 8th centuries

A.D., were reshaped, again in the cosmic setting, by *Tāntrikism*, one of the medieval great metaphysical syntheses of *India* which identified afresh Being and Becoming in terms of the endless, bewildering sport of *Śakti*, *Mahāmāyā* or *Mahāvidyā*. The *Tāntrika* renaissance ushered in another golden epoch for Indian art (A.D. 700-1200). *Tāntrikism*, on the contrary, regard Becoming or *Māyā-Śakti* as an accent of *Śiva* or *Brahman*. Being and Becoming, *Śiva* and *Śakti*, are accents or oscillations of the fundamental unchanging Essence. This basic metaphysics is presented in *Tantrika* myth and art through the dualism of male and female principles that proves so favourable for the poetic presentation of the universe. *Śakti* in *Tāntrika* art is Being or the Absolute and action and manifoldness : Nature, Life Mind in all their contrasts of silence and violence, charm and fierceness, life and death, ignorance and wisdom.

This metaphysical truth of *Tāntrikism*, Unity in Duality, is revealed in classic *Tāntrika* sculpture of the medieval and post-medieval periods through the figures of the Divine Couples, *Śiva* and *Pārvatī*, *Dhyānī Buddha* and *Prajñāpāramitā*, *Mañjuśrī* and *Tārā*, *Mahākāla* and *Cāmuṇḍā*, *Heruka* and *Parṇaśavarī*, metaphysical pairs whose names are legion in Eastern India, Nepal and Tibet-the homes of Brahmanical and Buddhist *Tāntricism*. *Tārānāth*, a Tibetan scholar of the 17th century, who wrote a *history of Buddhism*, mentions an active Eastern Indian school of Buddhist art under the *Imperial Palas*. This included two famous artists *Dhiman* and *Bitpalo*, painters and sculptors, who flourished probably in Nālandā in the 9th century A.D. and whose art had far-reaching influences extending to Nepal, Tibet, Burma, Sumātrā and Jāvā. The elegant yet vigorous Bengal school of painting which they founded, recall the traditions of Ajantā and Ellorā, as revealed by illustrations of various *Vajrayāna* deities on palm-leaf *Prajñāpāramitā* manuscripts dating from the ninth to the end of the twelfth century. The representation of *Tāntrika* couples from the *Umāśahita* and *Umāliṅgana* of orthodox *Hinduism* to the esoteric images of the *Vajrayāna*. Indian symbolism and art now come to combine lyricism with cosmism, compassion with power, and sweetness with grandeur. In Khajurāho, Bhubaneśvara and Koṇārak the profound awareness of the duality of sex in its full comprehensiveness and force has sculputured lovers (*Mithunas*) and their interlocked limbs in self-transcendence and rapture that far outreach physical enjoyment; while in every wall in every niche and in every column there are angels and maids, *Surasundarīs* and *Nāyikās* depicted as supremely and sweet, and yet serene, self-absorbed and aloof from the world. For it is they who lead Man to *Mahāmāyā*, the supreme *Enchantress* who is at the same time *Mahāvidyā*, the supreme *Deliveress*.

Nude images :

In Indian art from the *Yakṣis* and *Śālabhañjikās* of *Khajurāho*, Bhubaneśvara and *Koṇārak*, from the *Vidyās* of Keradu, Mudhera and Dilvara in Rajputana to the Ḍākinīs of Tibet, we have charming nude feminine images. But the Indian nude is typically overladen with jewels, necklaces, headgear and girdles whose sinuously gliding or angular treatment enhances the charms of the blossoming feminine body, the vehicles of divine power and enchantment. In India beauty must be adorned in order that it can come into its own (*alaṁkāra*) and even the disrobed, blue- hued *Kālī* must have *Śakti* without embellishment is simply unthinkable.

Tāntrik Art across the Pacific

But *Śakti* is not merely charm and loveliness as the *Surasundarī*, *Apsarā* or *Nāyikā* in the *Jaina* temples at *Dilvara* and as the danesuse in Sigirya, Borobodur, Siam, Cambodia and Yun Kang. Nor is she merely brooding motherliness and tenderness as Pārvatī and Lakṣmī in India, as Tārā and Prjñāpāramitā in South-East Asia, and as Kuan-Yin and Hāritī in China and Japan. She is also grim and fierce in her anger and fury in the destruction of man's ignorance and wickedness. We have in India the Fierce images of Durgā, Kālī, Cāmuṇḍā, Mārīcī and Parṇaśābarī. At the monastery of Nālandā, that in the final phase of development of Buddhism became centre of Vajrayāna *Tāntrikism*, the notable horrendous images found include *Vajrapāṇi*, *Vajrasattva*, *Trailokyavijaya*, *Yamāntaka*, *Mārīcī*, *Aparājitā* and *Vidyujjvālā Karālī*. These are perhaps the earliest apparitions of the grim and the terrible in Indian art, sanctioned by her greatest seat of learning, and soon dispersed from there to Eastern India, Nepal and Tibet. The dance of the grim and aweful Cāmuṇā was celebrated in Bhavabhūti's *Mālatīmādhava*. Several frightful images of *Kālī*, *Mārīcī* and *Cāmuṇḍā* with their attracting mouths and eyes were produced in particular by the *Pāla*-Sena school of sculpture in Bengal and Orissa. Some of these terrible goddesses have migrated to Indonesia. The spread of the

Tāntrika religion and art in the Pacific from Indonesia and Cambodia to China and Japan has drawn but little attention. But there is no doubt that *Tāntrika* art is responsible for some of the most vigorous and sublime representations of the awesome, shattering forces of life in world sculpture and this not only in Eastern India, Nepal and Tibet but also in the Pacific. *Tāntrika* deities are characterized by their ambivalent character-the combination of attributes of the charming and the demonic, and the compassionate and the wrathful. Hindu and Buddhist metaphysics is rooted in dialectical thinking, the unending synthesis of opposites that reveals the paradoxical nature of *Reality*. Joy and pain, brightness and darkness, beauty and ugliness, expansion and destruction complement and demand each other. The relentless operation of these antonymous or contradictions as the essence of life and truth itself is the profound conviction of *Tāntrikism*. The grandeur of *Tāntrika* art in India, Buddhist and Brahmanical, lies in its rendering with perfect balance the miracle of the interplay of the principles and aspects of life, tender and fierce, sweet and dreadful, serene and tumultuous.

Perhaps the opposites of charm and grimness, sweetness and loathsomeness, hope and terror in *Tāntrika* art obtained the most majestic, horrendous expressions not in the homeland, but in Indonesia. Nepal and Tibet produced the grim images of Red *Tārā*, *Ḍākinī*, *Yamāntaka*, *Heruka*, *Hevajra*, *Trailokyavijaya* and *Mahākāla*. Java carved the magnificent, formidable images of *Gaṇeśa*, *Bhairava* and *Trailokyavijaya*; *Siam* and *Cambodia* fashioned the terrible images of *Hevajra*. Above all, Japan conceived the dreadful images of Dai Itoku, (*Yamāntaka*), Fudo (*Vairocana*) Gosan-ze (*Trailokyavijaya*), Kongo (*Vajrapāṇī*) and Dia-ko-ku (*Mahākāla*) of *Shingon* art under the influence of the mystical Buddhist World Sect founded by the great teacher Kobo (A.D. 774-835). With less of prejudice such grand representations of the terrible should obtain world appreciation like the handiworks of Michael Angelo, Rodin and Balach of the Western art world. Though separated by centuries and thousands of miles, these world-literating Indian images belong to the same order of spiritual experience as the representations of *Śiva* vanquishing the demons at *Ellorā* and *Elephanṭā*, or the South Indian bronzes of *Gajāsurasaṁhāra-mūrti*. Their power and majesty become themselves the relentless expressions of *Mahā-śakti* externalized from inner vision.

Woman as the Mother and the Art

What about the loveliness of woman that Greek art utilizing the new knowledge of human anatomy celebrated? Classical Indian art models the figure of woman with reference of her supra-personal potentialities the hope and promise of motherhood of the race. The three-fold inflection (*tribhaṅga*) of the body, the globular breasts, the abdundant hips and thighs and the swan-like movements of the woman of Indian classical literature and art, irrespective of her name and place, testify to the preparedness for the actuality of motherhood which has a dominant significance in Indian culture. Not that Indian art did not depict the manifold charms and blandishments of the woman unattached to the home and family. In the legend about the genesis of painting, Ūrvaśī, the principal danesuse of heaven, sprang out of the hips of Viṣṇu in the same act of creation which gave birth to painting. *Yakṣinī, Vṛkṣakā, Śālabhañjikā* (the tree-cum-erotic woman) and *Gaṇikā* (the courtesan) were modelled in early Indian art with all their provocative charms and gestures side by side with the serene *Śrīmā* or *Gajalakṣmī*. But on the whole Indian art is stirred less by the physical charm of womanhood and more by its tenderness, wisdom and compassion. Thus the Indian classical images of *Pārvatī, Lakṣmī, Sarasvatī, Tārā* and *Prajñāpāramitā* are new types of feminine beauty in the world art, each invested with a distinct and profound cosmic meaning.

Indian symbolism makes the effulgent formr of the Mother Goddess *Kauśikī* grow out of the bodies, energies and excellences of all the gods and godly beings of earth and heaven who also adorn her with their own weapons, ornaments and symbols. Thus we read in the *Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa*: *By what was Śiva's energy her face has developed, and by Yama's energy grew her hair, and her arms by Viṣṇu's energy, by the Moon's her twin breasts, and her waist came into being by Indra's energy, and by Varuṇa's her legs and thighs, by the Earth's energy her hips, by Brahma's energy her feet, her toes by the Sun's energy and by the Vasu's energy her hand and fingers, and by Kubera's her nose, and her teeth grew by the Prajāpati's energy, and her three eyes were developed by Agni's energy, and her eyebrows were the energy of the two twilights, and her ears Vāyu's energy. This coming into being of the energies of the gods became* *the auspicious Goddess. Gazing at her, who had sprung from the concerted energies of all the gods, the immortals who were afflicted by the demon Mahiṣāsura felt a keen joy.*

Both the power and charm of the entire cosmos have gone into the making of the *Cosmic Mother* who transcends all human conceptions and attributes of strength, beauty and grace.

• • •

Conclusion

It has been proved by the modern science that we can utilize only little amount of energy given by the nature. rest of the energy lies dormant. The same concept is mirrored in the *Tāntric* concept of the *Kuṇḍalinī*. The goal of the *Kuṇḍaliniyoga* is the unfolding of this power or to be conscious about and realize this inherent latent power which in *Tantra* terms is known as the awakening of the *Kuṇḍalinīśakti*.

Tāntric way of unfolding of inherent power is very effective and at the same time dangerous also. *Sādhaka* should have tremendous patience, persistence and resistance to face any kind of consequences resulting from the process. Before *Kuṇḍalini* awakens *sādhaka* has to attain level of physical and mental preparations.

The *Kuṇḍalinī* resides in the subtle body but how the subtle body can exist without any residing place? Physical body satisfies this requirement. So for reaching the subtle, it is necessary to come over the limitations of gross. It means body should be purified or made devoid of any diseases.

Mere healthy body would not help. There is also one entity which is more subtle in nature than body and also inter-related with body, that is mind, which also should be pure and healthy. We are not affected only physical sufferings alone but mental ailments are also one of the root causes of our sufferings. Hence like body-mind also should be kept pure and concentrated.

But considering all these points, *Tantra* has worked out its way of attaining concentration in that form in which its proper application necessarily ensures health of both body and mind. This is really a significant aspect of *Tantrasādhanā* which puts *Tantra* on a higher stage.

How *Tāntric* way of concentration or meditation purifies and strengthens the body-mind-complex that we have seen under the title of *Tantra sādhanā*. There we have seen the value of Nyāsa, *Mudrā, Bhūtaśuddhi* etc.

This inner purification does not take place automatically. It requires *sādhanā* or constant practice. Initiation is required to enter into the realm of *sādhanā*. Only realized guru or *Guide* is entitled to initiate the novice. Thus in *Tantra sādhanā,* the basic requirement is to have an efficient Guru, not only at the initial level, but at the level of awakening the *Kuṇḍalinī* or piercing the centres.

The awakened *Kuṇḍalinī* ensures health of body-mind complex and also releases its latent powers which again fortifies body and mind against any attack from inside. The various aspects of the awakened *Kuṇḍalinī* namely, *Kriyāvatī, Kalāvatī, Vedhamayī* and *Varṇamayī* are not also devoid of therapeutic value.

The goal of *Tantrasādhanā* is out and out spiritual. Its goal is very lofty but not without any sound principles. For the attainment or for the realization of the source of universal energy, it has not neglected the physical body. On the contrary it has worked out those techniques or process through which the gross body or the microcosm can be sublimated into *macrocosm*. This is the most positive and priceless contribution of the *Tantra sādhanā*.

Like realization of *Reality*, unfoldment of physical and mental powers is also none of the goals of any *sādhanā* system. *Sādhanā* is key through which one can open the treasure of infinite powers. *Tantra* has done this job very significantly and because of this, Arthur Avalon says *Infact both popular and esoteric Hinduism is, in its practical aspect, largely Tāntric*.

Throughout the *Tantrasādhanā*, we could see that the process of *Nyāsa, Bhūtaśuddhi*, etc. is nothing but the various techniques for mastering and unfolding physical-mental powers. This requires purified body-mind-complex which is possible through *mantra, Haṭhayog* (postures) and *Prāṇāyāma* which are inclusive aspects of the *Tantrasādhanā*.

Through *Haṭhayogic* techniques body becomes free from diseases and through *Mantra sādhanā*, mind becomes calm and concentrated. Consistent positive thinking which is possible only in concentrated mind, can heal any diseases. This is the core of the thought therapy which has been found in present times.

For the desire results in the *Tantrasādhanā*, ritual commences with the resolution (*Saṅkalpa*). This resolution strengthens the mind of a *sādhaka* and also cultivates his Will Power which is the source of all power.

The result of *Tāntric sādhanā* is very quick, effective and enduring. At the same time, there is also a limitation of it. This *sādhanā* as the *Kulārṇavatantra* declares, is to walk on the edge of a razor, so for safety of a *sādhaka*, an experienced and authentic *Guru* is required which is rarely possible. So for a *Tantrasādhaka,* it is really important to have a realized soul as *Guru*.

Tantrasādhanā is a tree which is full of flowers and fruits of supernatural powers but a *guru* prevents his disciples to utilize it for mundane pleasures. *Sādhaka* attains the power in the process of awakening the *Kuṇḍalinī*.

If we want to have a pleasure of the fragrance of rose we have to concentrate only on rose instead of thorns. The fragrance of *Tantra*-rose lies in its conscicous approach to self-discovery and self-development through consciously expanding the scope of body- mind complex.

1. *Tantra*-a conscious approach:

The previous point reflects the reasons of degeneration of *Tantra* tradition. We see in that point that, instead of magic and sorceries, *Tantra* is a conscious approach to self-discovery. In the success of self-discovery certain obstructions arise which are created from the ignoracne of real nature of self and body.

As we know, *Tantra* is key to open the hidden treasure of physical, mental and psychic powers. The distinct feature of this *Sādhanā* is that it starts from the physical shealth (*Annamayakoṣa*), that is, represented largely by body. In *Tantra*, body though is a subject to decay, is highly esteemed as temple of the deity known as *Ātman* which is micro-form of *Lord Śiva* or ultimate Reality. It should therefore be consciously kept pure. This is the superiority of *Tantra* doctrine.

2. Positive view of life:

The approach of *Tantra* is highly positive. It is the message of *Tantra*, that nothing is to be neglected: nothing is to be negated. Everything is to be accepted and sublimated. Though our body is fragile, but *Tantra* says utilize your body-power, make it more and more powerful and strengthen it like a rock. Prepare body and mind to the extent that, it can endure any disturbance of outer and inner world. *Tantra* has not left its reader only by mentioning this. It has also prescibed the *Haṭhayog* āsanās, *Prāṇāyāma*, *Ṣaṭkarma* etc., for it. Everybody can utilize this for healthy body and mind. It is the most applied side of *Tantra* technique for layman. The only condition laid down by *Tantra* is that, all these *Āsanās* and other techniques should be done under the guidance of an expert otherwise it is likely to do more harm than good. After gaining control over them, one can freely practise them and enjoy the results.

The superiority of *Tantra* also can be seen from its effective results. You can cultivate your power and check its result at any step. If you want to achieve any goal and if there are some obstacles in your way, you can curb these through the technique of concentration like *Trāṭaka*. And because of this quick and effective results the

Mahānirvāṇatantra declares, *Other treatises are of no use while Tantra, Astrology and Medicine give its results constantly*. Thus *Tantra* removes obstacles related with mind-body.

Ignorance about the real nature of self is the root of suffering. Self means consciousness. We make a distinction between conscious and non-conscious entity or self and not self. But like *Tantra* seers, scientists also have declared that there is nothing like grossness or not-self. Everything is made out of atoms and that atom is nothing but the dance of energy or consciousness. This dance has been seen by living occidental scientist, Capra. In his well known book *Tao of Physics* he declares, *I saw cascades of energy coming down from outer space, in which particles were created and destroyed in rhythmic pulses: I saw the atoms of the elements and those of my body participating in the cosmic dance of energy; I felt its rhythm and I heard its sound, and at the moment I know that this was the dance of Shiva, the Lord of Dancers worshipped by the Hindus.*

The conclusion to which science has arrived through intellect that same has been realized or visualized by *Ṛṣis* as a result of their *Sādhanā*. The synthesis of a seer's and scientist's view has been beautifully made by Dr. Lalan Prasad which we shall quote here.

What is ultimately Reality? Is the Reality atoms and molecules, or something else of which these atoms are the different manifestations? The difference between a spiritualist and an objective thinker is based on the nature of Reality. The objective thinker holds the belief that Reality is crude matter of which mind is a chemical reaction. Due to clash and cohesion in the material *structure consciousness has emerged. Hence it is an epiphenomenon. We do agree with the materialist that mind is a by-product of matter how it is possible for this mother-matter to beget the child-mind without the conception of spirit? We know, nothing can come out of nothing. Hence the matter, is not devoid of consciousnesss. Indeed matter is nothing but crude manifestation of spirit. Einstein made a radical change in the concept of matter. He made a historical departure from the traditional definition of matter. Matter is not a dead inert substance which occupies some space. It is bottled up energy. To the spiritualist, energy is crude manifestation of consciousness. Consciousness is the Supreme Reality. All other objects and beings are matamorphosed forms of consciousness. Paramśiva is the Supreme Subjectivity. All other subjectivities or objectivities are mere blendings of the supreme consiousness.*

3. Realization of Supreme Consciousness:

So realization of supreme consicousness is the self-discovery to mankind. But how to realize that? *Tantra* says that the source of realization is already within our body but in latent form. It is latent because of our nescience which in *Tantra* terminology is known as *Pāśa* otherwise, without *Pāśa*, as the *Kulārṇavatantra* declares, *The individual self itself is the universal self. Sadāśiva is that who is bondless (Pāśamukta) while Jīva is that who is surrounded by Pāśa.*

Pāśa is created due to attachment with world. But how world is created? In the *Tāntric* form of *Layayoga* or in *Ṣaṭcakrabheda*, the five gross constitutional elements (*Pañcamahābhūta*) of both universe and body dissolve in their source. It means during the process of this *Yoga*, the earth element dissolves into water, water into *Teja*, *Teja* into *vāyu* and *vāyu* into *ākāṣa*. And this ākāśa element further dissolves into their essences like *Śabda*, *Sparśa*, *Rūpa*, *Rasa* and *Gandha* which again merge into *Buddhi*, *Ahaṁkāra* etc. and ultimately into the spirit or consciousness. Thus the individual consciousness unites with the universal consciousness. A harmony between diversities takes place in the personality of a *Sādhaka*. Then whatever he thinks, acts or wills is not like ours but whatever he does, perfectly and totally as if were, through him the ultimate *Reality* manifest itself.

This seems beyond our capacity to accept this process of evolution. Because Evolution is simply the capacity to register meanings that are already exist but which are not yet apparent to the unenlightened mind. The higher the form of life, the deeper the capacity to register meaning. Any increase in subtlety is an inward evolution developed through the examination of meanings and vibration that so far have been to find to grasp. The creative person taps the powers of the sub-conscious and, in doing so, he becomes aware of forces that are normally inaccessible to the consicousness.

If large numbers of intelligent persons were to take to these practices, freed from the aura of mystery it may be possible to produce a group of people who would be extra ordinary from every point of view: Prodigies of the highest order, with a command over all the major languages and sciences, a new elite from whom would come new forms of education and who would in sense, keep a watch over the human race.

This type of evolution, as Sri Arobindo thinks, will take place in a *Gnostic Being* which has yet to come on human territory. The nature of this Gnostic Being has been described by him in his *Life Divine*.

In this age when everybody is made after having more and more energy, it is rightly declared *Tantra*, as the scripture of the *Kali* age, which is directly related with energy. Of course, its way of achieving energy is very difficult and it requires genuine *Guru* or guide who is rarely available.

We live in a world of dualities like heat-cold, day-night, male- female, mental-vital, intellect-emotion etc. For integrated personality the harmony between these two opposite is required. In subtle body these opposites are *Iḍā* and *Piṅgalā* which on physical level work as sympathetic and para sympathetic nervous channels. Harmony between these two also leads to the harmony between *metabolic* and *ketabolic* function, which is ascribed to those channels of body. This makes body healthy and free from diseases.

The practice of the *Haṭhayoga* ensures the cultivation of mental powers like telepathy, omnipotency, omnipresence etc. but this is not the aim of a real *Sādhaka*. These are the side- effects of his *Sādhanā*. A genuine *Sādhaka* uses these powers for the welfare of society. There are some saints and seers who have devoted their powers and life for the humanity. All these living examples lead us to believe in the decendence of divinity towards humanity. The whole humanity is waiting for the incarnation of that divinity. This divinity can be achieved through this *Tantrasādhanā* practised under a preceptor having a good *tantra* knowlegde.

● ● ●

Bibliography

SANSKRIT TEXTS

Atharva Veda, ed. S.P.D. Satvalekar, Bombay.

Brahmapurāṇa, Guru Mandal Series Calcutta 1954.

Bhāgvatapurāṇā, Gita Press Gorakhpur.

Brahmasūtra-śaṅkarabhāṣya, Motilal Banarsidas Delhi.

Devībhāgavatapurāna, Pandit Pustakalaya Kashi 1956

Doctrine of Sakti in Indian Literature. P.C. Chakravarti. Calcutta-1940

Devīpurāṇa ed. Dr. Pushpendra Kumar, Delhi 1976

Gītā, Gita press Gorakhpur.

Harivaṁśa, Critical edition by P.L. Vaidya, Poona 1969

Harṣacharitam, Bana Bhatt.

Kālikāpurāṇa, ed. B.N. Shastri

Kenopaniṣad, Śankara Bhasya.

Kulārṇavatantra, A. Avalon.

Liṅgapurāna, Guru Mandal Series Calcutta 1960.

Manusmṛti, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Series Benares.

Mahābhārata, ed. S.P.D. Satvaleker 1940.

Mahābhāgavatapurāna, ed. Dr. Pushpendra Kumar, Delhi 1983.

Mahānirvāṇtantra, A. Avalon.

Mārkaṇḍeyapurāna, Guru Mandal Series Calcutta 1962.

Mṛcchakaṭikam, ed. M.R. Kale.

Rāmāyaṇa, Gita Press Gorakhpur.

Ṛgveda, ed. S.P.D. Satvalekar.

Śaktisaṅgamatantra, Kālikhanda, Baroda.

Saptaśatī, V.S. Agrawal, Kashi.

Śākta Upaniṣads, ed. A.M. Shastri, the Adyar library, Masras 1950.

Śatapathabrāhmaṇ, Achuta Granth Malā Kashi 1974:

ENGLISH WORKS

Anuruddha, R.P., *Introduction into Lamaism*. Hoshiarpur, 1959.

A. Avalon, *Garland of Letters*. Madras, 1955.
Principles of Tantra, Madras, 1960.
The Great Liberation, Madras, 1963.
The Serpent Power, Madras, 1958.
The World as Power, Madras, 1958.
The World as Power, Madras, 1957.

Bharati, A. *The Tantric Tradition*. London, 1965.

Bhattacharya, B., *An Introduction to Buddhist Esotericim*, Benares, 1964.

The Indian Buddhist Iconography, Calcutta, 1968.

Two Vajrāyana Works, Baroda, 1929.

Niṣpannayogāvali, Baroda, 1949.

Guhyasamāja Tantra, Baroda, 1931.

Sādhanamālā, Baroda, 1968.

Brahma, N., *The Philosophy of Hindu Sādhanā*, Calcutta, 1932.

Chakravarti, C., *The Soma or Sauma Sect of the Shaivas*, Calcutta 1932.
The Tantras: Studies on their Religion and Literature Culcutta 1963.

Chandra, Lokesh., *Mandalas of the Tantra-Samuccaya*, Delhi 1969.

Esoteric Teachings of the Tibetan Tantra, New York. 1968.

D.N. Bose, Tantras---Their Philosophy and occult secrets, Hiralal Haldthem Delhi-56.

Danielou, A., *Hindu Polytheism*, London, 1951.

Dasgupta, Sh., *An Introduction to Tantrik Buddhism* Calcutta, 1950.

Obscure Religious Cults, Calcutta, 1962.

Diskshit, S.K., *The Mother Goddess*, Delhi, 1960.

Garrison, O., *Tantra: The Yoga of Sex, New York. 1964.*

Gordon, A., *The Iconography of Tibetan Lamaism, New York, 1959.*

Goswami, H., *Kāmaratna Tantra*, Guwahati, 1928.

Govinda, Lama., *The Psychological Attitude of Early Buddhist Philosophy*, London, 1961.

Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism, London, 1962.

Guenther, H., Gampoca*The Jewel Ornamental Liberation*, London, 1959.

Yuganaddha: The Tantric View of Life, Benares, 1964.

Jhaveri, M., *Comparative and Critical Study of Mantrashastra*, Ahmedabad. 1944.

Kazi, Lama Samdup., *Shrichakrasambhava Tantra*, Madras. 1910.

L.P. Singh, *Tantra---Its Mystic and Scienctific Basis*. Delhi- 1976.

Mookerjee, Ajit., *Tantra Art, Basel, 1966.*

Mukherjee, R., *Theory and Art of Mysticism*, Bombay, 1960.

Neumann, E., *The Great Mother*, New York, 1961.

P.C. Bagachi, Studies in the Tantras---Calcutta-1939.

Pandit M.P., *Studies in the Tantras and the Veda*, Madras, 1967.
Lights on the Tantra, Madras, 1968.
Gems from the Tantras, Madras, 1969.

Pandit, M.P., *Aurobindo on the Tantra*. Madras.

Payne, E., *The Shaktas: An Introduction and Comparative Study*.Calcutta, 1933.

Philip Rawson, *Tantra*--- London-1973.

Pott, P.,*Yoga and Yantra*. Leiden, 1966.

Rele, V.G., *Mysterious Kundalini, Bombay, 1927.*

Sahu, N., *Buddhism in Orissa*, Cuttack, 1958.

Saunders, E., *Mudra*, London, 1960.

Sen, R., *Asteric Enjoyment: Its Background in Philosophy and Medicine*, Calcutta, 1966.

Shastri, H.,*Origin and Cult of Tara,* Calcutta, 1925.

Sinha, J., *Shākta Monism amd Cult of Shakti.*

Sircaar, D.C., *The Shaktapiṭhas*, 1960.

Snellgrove, D., *Buddhist Himalaya*, Oxford, 1957.
The Hevajra Tantra, Oxford, 1959.

Thomas, P., *Kāma Kalā: Hindu Ritual of love*. Bombay, 1960.

Tucci, Giuseppe., *Indo-Tibetica*, Rome, 1932-41.
Tibetan painted Scrolls, Rome, 1949.
Theory and practice of the Mandala. London, 1961.
Tibet, London, 1967.

Zhomans B. Coburn, *Devimāhātmya*--- Delhi-84.

Prof. Pushpendra Kumar, Professor, former Head of the Department of Sanskrit, Delhi University, Delhi.

First class first and Gold Medallist in M.A. (Sanskrit). Delhi University—1958. Shastri- Panjab University.

Ph.D. on *Śakti Cult in the Purāṇas* (Published) 1967.

Common-Wealth Scholar and Post-doctoral fellow, London University—London 1970-72.

Visited Many European Countries viz. France, Italy, West Germany, Austria, Holland, Switzerland and Greek for higher studies and lectures.

Principal, Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri Kendriya Sanskrit Vidyapeetha, Delhi, 1972-74.

Fellow of Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland since 1971.

Author of 15 books and more then 50 articles.

General editor : *Cultural Hertage from the Purāṇas* : (a ten volume project) of the *Purāṇa—Vidyā Series*.

Chief Investigator—U.G.C. Major Research project—*A descriptive Catalogue of Sanskrit Inscriptions.*

Received-Delhi Sanskrit Akademi Award-1997

A4S2

योऽनूचानः स नो महान्

राष्ट्रियसंस्कृतसंस्थानम्

RASHTIRYA SANSKRIT SANSTHAN
56-57, Institutional Area, Janakpuri,
New Delhi-110058